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Passenger Transport in Worcestershire

**Report of the Passenger
Transport Scrutiny Task Group**

April 2006

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Foreword

I am pleased to be able to present this Scrutiny Report on behalf of colleagues. Our task group was made up of 7 councillors drawn from every district of the county and was supported by scrutiny officers Suzanne O'Leary and Stella Wood and by Tony Dipple and John Evans, the scrutiny liaison officers for Finance and Environmental Services respectively.

Our task has been to explore whether existing passenger transport and information provision in Worcestershire provides what residents want within the limits of affordability, whether the council is getting good value for money for its expenditure, and whether planned future provision will bring about the desired improvements.

It is an enormous subject area which is changing fast. We have had to limit our scope in order to meet the agreed timetable, and there is potential for further scrutiny work to build on this report at a later date.

I would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work and enthusiasm. At every stage of our investigation people have been helpful, welcoming and generous of their time. It has been an exciting exercise to be involved in, at a time of rapid change in service delivery. The successful launch of Project Express has brought about a real lift in morale in the Passenger Transport Group that is good to see.

When discussing the pros and cons of passenger transport in the area, it is important to remember that commercial transport providers are businesses. They stand or fall by their profit levels and must follow the priorities of their management board. The trick is for council and business to work creatively together so that both achieve their objectives.

We hope this report will spark off further debate and ideas for the improvement of access and attractiveness of public passenger transport. We would welcome your feedback.

Liz Tucker
Lead member of the Passenger Transport in Worcestershire Scrutiny Task Group

April 2006

Executive Summary

It is vital that people have access to key services such as health, education, and shops, and also to employment opportunities. Worcestershire County Council, as the local transport authority, has been required to develop a strategy on accessibility, which aims to ensure that people can access services at reasonable cost, in reasonable time, and with reasonable ease.

Buses and passenger transport clearly play a crucial role in this, but the withdrawal of a large number of bus services in recent years has led to major concerns and the quality of local bus services was a key issue that was raised with members during the 2005 local election campaign. Performance indicators on satisfaction with bus services and satisfaction with passenger information are low compared to similar authorities.

The County Council currently spends around £3.2m subsidising bus services and members were concerned whether this investment was worthwhile. They were also keen to find out from other authorities what factors contributed to their higher levels of satisfaction and whether this could be emulated in Worcestershire. In September 2005 the Overview and Scrutiny Steering Committee therefore agreed to establish a scrutiny task group.

Terms of Reference

The scrutiny task group's remit was to examine:

- (a) whether passenger transport services in Worcestershire are provided the way people want in urban and rural areas, in terms of quality and affordability; access; and information;
- (b) what value for money Worcestershire County Council is getting for its expenditure on subsidised services (in comparison with other authorities) and what level of resources are needed to get the services as set out in the strategy;
- (c) whether the planned future provision of passenger transport will improve quality and affordability, access, and information, and what is being done to increase passenger numbers to meet the government target; and
- (d) what progress has been made on previous scrutiny recommendations.

Key Findings

Lack of buses and poor or unreliable bus services were identified as key issues for local people (para 10). In particular, people highlighted:

- Problems caused by suddenly axing bus services;
- Poor response to complaints/comments;
- Difficulties finding route information leaflets and information at bus stops;
- Lack of coordination between bus and train times;
- Unreliability on some routes; and

- Lack of consideration by some drivers/driver training issues.

Customer Care

The scrutiny task group has concluded that the problems with complaints handling by Worcestershire County Council and the bus operator, the lack of information provided to the public about bus services and the lack of public participation in considering new routes, is symptomatic of a poor approach to customer care generally by both the bus operators and Worcestershire County Council. (para 73)

Value for Money

The scrutiny carried out a comparison with a sample of seven other county councils, which shows that Worcestershire's total spend on passenger transport per head of population in 2005/06 (£9.58) is just above the £9.56 mean of our sample. (para 92)

However, Worcestershire's spend per head on subsidised services is the second highest, although the range of spending levels is wide. (para 93)

The scrutiny found that, although there is an upward trend forecast for passenger journey numbers for 2005/06, if the expected effect of Project Express in Worcester is subtracted there continues to be an underlying decline across the rest of the County. (para 98)

The scrutiny task group did not find evidence for or against bus subsidies overall being good value for money. Given the relatively high cost per passenger for some routes members agreed that in some cases alternatives to buses might be more appropriate. (para 112)

Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy

The scrutiny task group strongly supports the vision at the heart of the proposed integrated passenger transport strategy and welcomes the business plan approach to the establishment of Project Express in Worcester. The task group also welcomes the Project Express model being rolled out across the county and looks forward to receiving a detailed timescale for this and the implementation of the whole strategy. (para 148)

However the task group has a number of concerns about the integrated passenger transport strategy:

- lack of clarity over funding the strategy,
- the ambitious timescales for roll out,
- the ambitious forecasts for passenger number increases,
- possible difficulties getting bus priority measures (eg bus lanes) in place,
- the possible difficulties with the development of new park and ride sites,
- the lack of a timescale for the purchase of high quality, low floor buses,
- the current lack of detailed estimated costs for the feeder services and the costs of expansion of the vision across the county,

- some uncertainty about whether concessionary fares would be available on feeder services,
- the lack of pooled budgets in passenger transport group so far, and
- the risk of creating more social exclusion if the aims of the strategy are not achieved. (para 149)

It is currently unclear whether concessionary fares will be available on all these feeder services. Under the new strategy there will be fewer “traditional” bus routes and if concessionary fares are not available on the new feeder services we are concerned that this will exacerbate social exclusion and accessibility to services could worsen. The scrutiny task group considers that, in order to ensure equitable services for all, concessionary fares must be available on the majority of feeder services. (para 144)

Relationship with Bus Operators

All of the local authorities that we visited stressed the importance of having an effective working relationship with the main bus operator in order to provide good quality services. (para 184)

In Telford and Cambridgeshire, relationships worked well partly because of the creative and aspirational personalities driving forward improvements and partly because council staff had, in the beginning, brought positive proposals (eg bus priority) to the table and also helped their commercial operator with developing a business case for particular routes. (para 185)

We recognise that when profit margins are tight, operators will want to reduce costs wherever possible. We consider that, in order to develop an effective relationship, it is vital that the County Council, including members, understand the commercial pressures that operators face. (para 190)

Bus Priority Measures

Implementing bus priority measures is unpopular and difficult. However they will be essential if the operators are to be able to run regular and reliable services. Investing in them will enable the Council to improve value for money in bus services, as satisfaction and the commercial viability of some routes are likely to increase. (para 198)

If the Council is to take practical steps to expand the developing strategy across the County (ie implementing bus priority measures) there needs to be (para 199):

- the same kind of creativity and energy in Worcestershire as we saw in Telford and Cambridgeshire,
- shared priorities and understanding between passenger transport and highways,
- a two-way relationship with the bus operator – if priority measures are established, they must provide the promised bus service,
- strong political leadership, and
- a close partnership between the county and districts.

Bus Quality Partnerships

Members were concerned about the success of Bus Quality Partnerships and lack of attendance by commercial operators, and welcome the review to assess the effectiveness and purpose. It is very much hoped this will lead to improved relationships between the county, districts, commercial operators and users. (para 200)

District Councils

The District Councils are essential partners in delivering passenger transport objectives. They will need to be fully on board if the new vision is to be effectively rolled out. (para 208)

Traffic Commissioner

The Traffic Commissioner of the West Midlands has responsibility for the registration of local bus services and can hold public inquiries to consider the possibility of disciplinary action against operators who have not observed the conditions of their licences. Warwickshire County Council had a good relationship with the Traffic Commissioner, which they noted was a tremendous help in monitoring commercial services and any complaints about commercial services. Worcestershire's relationship is not so well established and we welcome the efforts being made by our Passenger Transport Operations Manager, Andy Baker, to develop it further. (para 52)

Previous Scrutiny Recommendations

We received a report on progress on actions taken since the previous scrutiny report on bus services (September 2003) attached as Appendix 8. **We are satisfied that the issues raised in the report have been properly addressed.** (para 157)

Recommendations

(a) ARE WE DELIVERING WHAT THE PUBLIC WANT FROM BUS SERVICES?

Recommendation 1

We recommend that a county route map (in London underground style) showing routes by all operators should be produced and promoted as soon as possible. It should include contact phone numbers to customer focussed staff and contain a clear rider that routes may be changed at short notice. (para 32)

Recommendation 2

We also recommend that timetable leaflets should be produced, which are cheap and easy to update, as well as a 'Check-mate' (see para 25) type list. These should be available at a specified number of outlets and we recommend staff resources are identified to maintain and update stocks. (para 33)

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Worcestershire Hub should provide information on, or links to, all transport services across the county. (para 36)

Recommendation 4

Currently each district has a different contact phone number for the Hub, meaning that a county wide route map would need 6 different phone numbers. To make it easier for the public to obtain information, we strongly recommend that a county wide phone number be created for the Hub (in addition to the district based numbers) and clearly advertised on buses and bus information literature and the council's website. (para 37)

Bus Stops

Recommendation 5

We recommend that clear and up to date information is made available and kept updated at bus stops throughout the county. Each bus stop (or main stop in a rural area/settlement) should have a flag where appropriate and information case which should include, as a minimum, in addition to Traveline, phone numbers to ring for customer complaints and/or queries. The livery should also be clearly recognisable and consistent across the county. (para 44)

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the county council works with parish council clerks to ensure that updated timetables are displayed in at least one main bus stop in each settlement. We encourage Passenger Transport Staff to seek the help of local members where necessary and think creatively to drive forward improvement should problems arise. (para 46)

Performance Management

Recommendation 7

The scrutiny task group considers that it should be clear, as in Nottinghamshire, how and by who services are to be monitored. We recommend that a more detailed set of local indicators is developed to ensure robust performance monitoring. We welcome the establishment of the performance management team and urge that they have clear ownership and pride in good performance, with the power to act if standards are slipping. (para 57)

Complaints

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the Passenger Transport Group establishes a robust process for complaints. This would include logging the initial complaint, chasing up responses, and creating a record of the sorts of complaints that are received (eg driver attitude, lack of information, late bus etc) so that trends can be seen and improvements made. (para 71)

Recommendation 9

We also recommend that the Worcestershire Hub should be a first port of call for complaints about bus services and would be best placed to log those complaints

and chase up replies to users. This emphasises the need for a single county-wide telephone number for the Hub (in addition to the existing District based numbers). (para 72)

Customer Care

Recommendation 10

We recommend that Passenger Transport Group negotiates a pilot arrangement, for say a 6-9 month period (either full time or part time), with Bus Users UK to:

- organise bus user groups across the county;
- help Worcestershire County Council develop its understanding of how to meet customers' needs;
- advise on the development of a complaints process and investigate complex complaints in order to help form future procedures; and
- at the end of the pilot produce a report on the development of customer care in Worcestershire.

The funding for this pilot should come from the Passenger Transport Group's existing resources. As commercial operators have expressed a desire to improve in customer care, the possibility of contributions from them should also be investigated. (para 81)

(b) ARE PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES IN WORCESTERSHIRE GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY?

Recommendation 11

We recommend that objective and transparent criteria for determining which services are subsidised are drawn up, in consultation with Bus Quality Partnerships and the Joint Members' Passenger Transport Forum. They should be clearly based on the objectives of the developing strategy. (para 124)

Recommendation 12

We also recommend that a clear process for decision-making on subsidised services is established, incorporating elements of the Nottinghamshire Performance Management Framework approach. This process should include consultation with local members. (para 125)

(c) WILL THE PLANNED FUTURE PROVISION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT IMPROVE QUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY, ACCESS, AND INFORMATION?

Recommendation 13

The vision for integrated delivery of passenger transport services should enable public transport, education transport, and social care transport to see improved value for money. Members recognise that all Directorates will want to continue to control their own budgets. However the planning and delivery of services will need to be integrated in order to achieve the potential savings which will help the emerging strategy to be rolled out. **We therefore recommend that planning and delivery of all passenger transport services is integrated, enabling Directorates to maintain their own budgets but with the Head of Passenger**

Transport able to use the money in the most flexible, cost effective way.
(para 147)

Recommendation 14

The emerging Integrated Transport Strategy will need strong and committed leadership, in particular from members in both county and districts. However we need reassurance about just how achievable the aims of the strategy are. The concept is there but needs underpinning by a sound business case. It is vital therefore that detailed plans, including estimated costs, budgets and timescales, are developed. We urge the Joint Members' Passenger Transport Forum to work as quickly as possible to establish these. **We recommend that the Cabinet Member provides a progress report to Council on how these plans are developing.** (para 150)

Recommendation 15

We realise that each Cabinet in county and districts will have to approve and sign up to the new strategy (and the subsequent spending required to implement it) but recommend that more opportunities should be available for county councillors to have an input into the strategy at an earlier stage. (para 153)

Alternatives to subsidised routes

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the Passenger Transport Group look further into the feasibility of purchasing its own fleet for flexible and combined use as appropriate, as described in Warwickshire. (para 164)

Relationship with Bus Operators

Recommendation 17

Clearly an effective working relationship at the top level of the organisations, and a mutual desire to improve bus services, are the key to success. We recommend that the Cabinet Member with Responsibility provides an update on the development of the relationship with bus operators in the annual or bi-annual report to Council. (para 189)

PASSENGER TRANSPORT IN WORCESTERSHIRE SCRUTINY REPORT

April 2006

INTRODUCTION

1. It is vital that people have access to key services such as health, education, and shops, and also to employment opportunities. Worcestershire County Council, as the local transport authority, has been required to develop a strategy on accessibility, which aims to ensure that people can access services at reasonable cost, in reasonable time, and with reasonable ease.
2. Buses and passenger transport clearly play a crucial role in this, but the withdrawal of a large number of bus services in recent years led to major concerns, and the quality of local bus services was a key issue raised with members during the 2005 local election campaign. These concerns are reflected by Worcestershire's performance on satisfaction with bus services and satisfaction with passenger information, which is low compared to similar authorities. Members were keen to find out from other authorities what factors contributed to their higher levels of satisfaction and whether this could be emulated in Worcestershire.
3. In line with a national trend, passenger journey numbers in Worcestershire have been falling. However, the Department for Transport (DfT) has a National Public Service Agreement target to increase bus use by more than 12% in England by 2010, compared to 2000.¹ Members wanted to explore what was being done to help increase the number of passenger journeys.
4. In 2004/05 Worcestershire County Council spent £3.5m on passenger transport, which was above average compared to other county councils. This expenditure increased to £4.2m in 2005/06, including £3.2m subsidising bus services and, given relatively low satisfaction levels and falling passenger journeys, members were concerned whether this investment was worthwhile. In September 2005 the Overview and Scrutiny Steering Committee therefore agreed to establish a scrutiny task group.

Terms of Reference

5. The scrutiny task group's remit was to examine:
 - (a) whether passenger transport services in Worcestershire are provided the way people want in urban and rural areas, in terms of quality and affordability; access; and information;
 - (b) what value for money Worcestershire County Council is getting for its expenditure on subsidised services (in comparison with other authorities) and what level of resources are needed to get the services as set out in the strategy;

¹ Department for Transport Annual Report 2005, Chapter 5 para 5.4

(c) whether the planned future provision of passenger transport will improve quality and affordability, access, and information, and what is being done to increase passenger numbers to meet the government target; and

(d) what progress has been made on previous scrutiny recommendations.

Passenger transport is a vast subject area, covering buses, taxis and train services. This scrutiny has focused on bus services, although there was some discussion about community and demand responsive transport and shared taxi services.

6. Cllr Liz Tucker (Wychavon, Pershore Division) agreed to lead the scrutiny task group and the members were:

- Liz Tucker (Lead Member)
- John Campion (Wyre Forest, Bewdley Division)
- Ed Moore (Bromsgrove, Clent Hills Division)
- Philip Mould (Redditch, Arrow Valley West Division)
- Fran Oborski (Wyre Forest, Kidderminster, St Georges and St Oswalds Division)
- Di Rayner (Malvern, Malvern Chase Division)
- Richard Udall (Worcester, St John Division)

7. Details of the task group's activity and visits to Telford and Wrekin, Cambridgeshire, Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire are at Appendix 1. We would like to thank all those who provided information to the scrutiny, in particular to the staff of Passenger Transport Group and the local authorities who made us welcome in our visits and completed our questionnaire.

(a) ARE WE DELIVERING WHAT THE PUBLIC WANT FROM BUS SERVICES?

8. In order to establish whether the County Council is helping to provide the bus services that residents want, the scrutiny task group firstly considered whether the County Council understands what those wishes are. It was explained that there had been a number of public consultations and surveys.² Passenger Transport Group considered that people's concerns were widely known and reflected national patterns. Furthermore they felt the public had been *over* consulted about what they wanted from bus services.

9. A press release at the beginning of the scrutiny resulted in a number of comments from local people that tallied with concerns and desires previously expressed. The issues raised are discussed in the following sections. The task group considered whether to hold public meetings in

² i.e. Residents' survey Dec 2005 carried out by MORI, Sustrans Sustainable Travel Towns Survey by Socialdata, LTP2 consultations + others listed on the councils consultation database

each district area but decided an objective third party organisation (such as Bus Users UK) would get better quality feedback from such events.

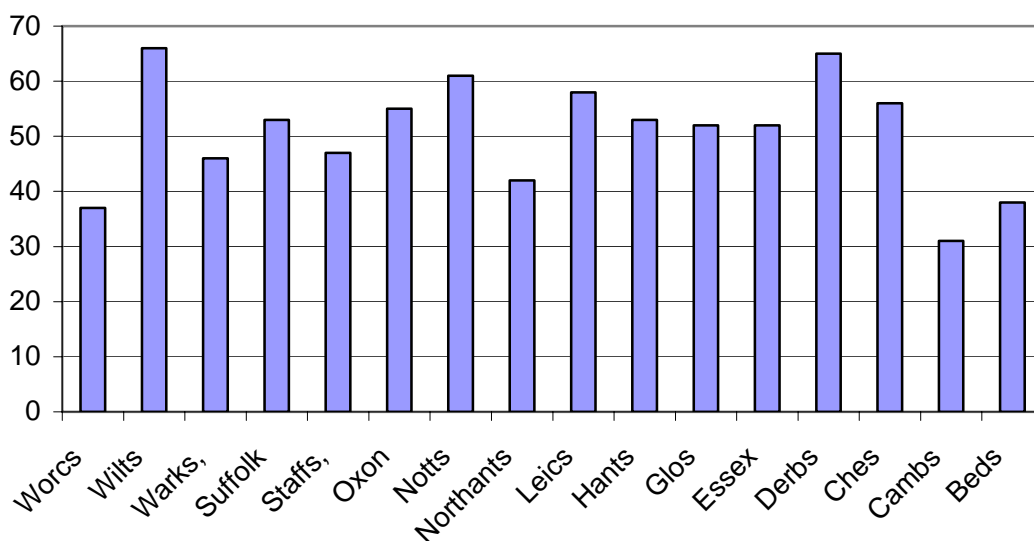
Satisfaction with bus services

10. Lack of buses and poor or unreliable bus services were identified as key issues for local people both by members and in the consultation on Local Transport Plan 2. We received similar comments at the start of the scrutiny. In particular people highlighted:

- Problems caused by suddenly axing bus services;
- Poor response to complaints/comments;
- Difficulties finding route information leaflets and information at bus stops;
- Lack of coordination between bus and train times;
- Unreliability on some routes; and
- Lack of consideration by some drivers/driver training issues.

11. In addition, the statutory best value performance indicator on satisfaction with bus services (BVPI 104), which is surveyed every three years, shows relatively low levels of satisfaction with services (37%) compared to other authorities, placing Worcestershire in the bottom quartile.

BVPI 104 (2003/04) satisfaction with bus services

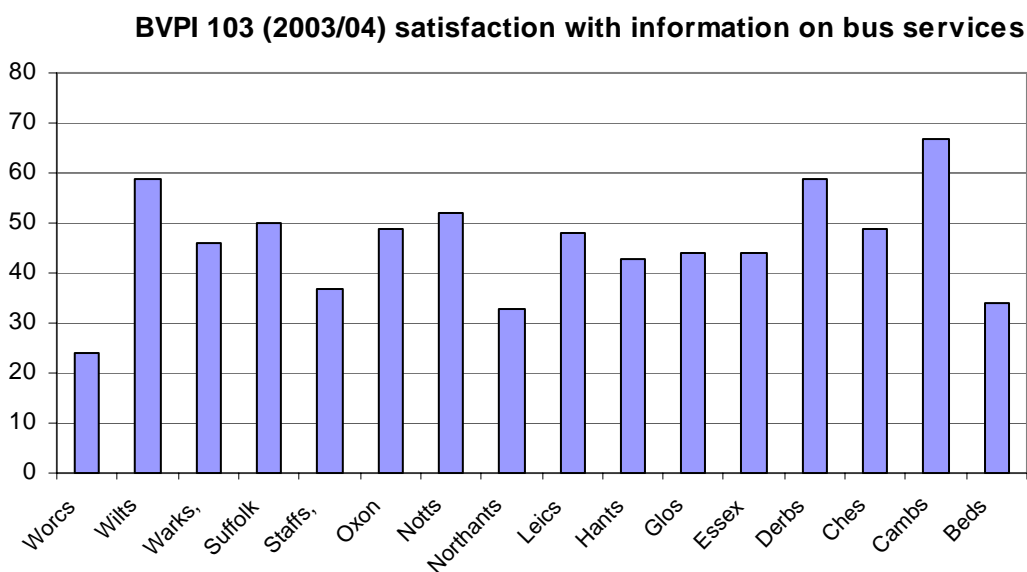


12. It is recognised that satisfaction levels are not necessarily a robust indicator. Firstly, the indicator is based on satisfaction amongst all residents not just amongst bus users. Secondly, people’s opinions can be influenced by a wide number of factors or relate to specific recent events. One of the authorities we spoke to, with relatively high levels of satisfaction, had conducted a full face-to-face survey to get a fuller and clearer picture and to try to minimise the problem of only those with complaints filling in survey questionnaires.

13. At the end of last year the County Council commissioned MORI to conduct a similar survey. This showed that 34% of residents are either fairly or very satisfied with the local bus service overall, which is a disappointing drop from 37%. However, 21% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and only 19% were fairly or very dissatisfied. The frequency of buses and the state of bus stops were the top issues for dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction with information on bus services (BVPI 103)

14. Worcestershire also has relatively low satisfaction with information on bus services (see table below), with 24% of the general public feeling satisfied in 2003/04.³ It is again disappointing that this had not increased in the recent MORI survey.



15. These results tally with the comments we received from the public, which included complaints about lack of information and no advance warning about changes to frequency or cuts in particular bus routes. Several concerned residents (particularly in Wyre Forest) made the point that the most vulnerable suffered the most and cited examples of older or frail people having to wait outside in cold/wet conditions and missing doctors appointments.
16. Other concerns were the lack of paper route maps and timetables, and a lack of timetable information at bus stops. The MORI survey⁴ found that 64% of residents want paper timetables and the latest citizens' panel survey found that only 19% of those over 60 years would ever consider using the internet to access information on council services. Also, the Travel

³ Best Value Performance Indicator 103 (tri-annual survey 2003/04)

⁴ Results of the Worcestershire County Council Residents' survey Dec 2005 carried out by MORI

Behaviour Research Baseline Survey 2004⁵ found that “lack of information is the greatest subjective barrier to increasing use of public transport.”

Bus Service Information

The Council's Role

17. The County Council has a responsibility to ensure that information is provided to the public on local transport services. The authority also has a role in ensuring the information produced by private transport companies for local services is up to the required standard.⁶

Current provision

18. The County Council uses the nationally recognised journey planner service ‘Traveline’ (tel 0870 608 2 608) to provide information on times of buses between any two places. Timetable information is also available online at the Council’s website (<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/transport>) which has links to commercial operators, Flexi-link, home to school transport, and (since February 2006) community transport. Bus operators also have information online. First’s website shows route maps for Redditch, Kidderminster and Worcester and shows details of all their routes regionally and nationally.
19. Members looked at the Council’s website and considered it had an unhelpful layout and that it was difficult to find timetables. We heard from users of instances where information on First’s website was incorrect or out of date and did not tally with information provided by Traveline.
20. Online information is useful and internet access is available at libraries, although there may be a charge for printing. However the provision of paper timetables across the county is inconsistent. The task group found that the County Council no longer provided comprehensive paper timetables. We were advised that this was because of the large number of changes to the network over the past few years, which had made it very costly to keep timetable books up to date. The County Council, in partnership with Malvern Hills District Council, had recently produced a glossy bus timetable booklet after numerous requests for one from their customer contact centre. However we heard that this became out of date almost as soon as it was published due to changes to service.
21. The main commercial operator, First in the Midlands, provides leaflets on its routes either at or near bus stations (if there is one) in larger towns. In some towns these are available from designated newsagents.
22. With regards to informing people about changes to routes or timetables and axing services, the operator is obliged to give the Traffic Commissioner 56 days notice and on contracted services the notice given to the County Council depends on the terms and conditions of the contract. In general this is two months but this is currently being reassessed and may be

⁵ Summary of results from the surveys undertaken in each of the three designated ‘Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns’ of Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester.

⁶ Transport Act 2000, Part II, Chapter 38, Sections 139 and 140

extended to six months. On receiving this notice the County Council may consider whether to subsidise the service. Whether or not a replacement service can be provided, the County Council endeavours to give the public advance notice via both the incumbent operator and the Bus Bulletin. The County Council provides a Bus Bulletin on an approximately quarterly basis to the District, City and Parish Councils to notify them of any changes to bus services. Passenger Transport Group is currently looking at wider use of different media (such as newspaper advertising) to complement the above activity.

Provision in other Authorities

23. During the scrutiny members visited other local authorities that (according BVPIs 103 and 104 2003/04) had higher levels of satisfaction on services and information.

Telford Travelink

24. *Travelink* is Telford's one-stop shop based in the bus station for information and ticket sales about all passenger transport services, including all bus, rail, taxi and community based transport services. Forms to submit complaints about services are also available there. It has been very successful and since opening there have been increased ticket sales and passenger numbers.

County Route Map and Leaflets

25. Warwickshire have a series of reasonably cheap to produce leaflets detailing individual (or small groups of) bus routes, and a public transport map showing all routes. A 'Check-mate' leaflet was also published regularly, which showed people the most recent version of the booklets and further information contact details. Leaflets and maps are available in a limited number of outlets such as Libraries, Tourist Information Centres, some main bus stops, some shops, and in villages' Post Offices. The information points are regularly checked and re-stocked by an Information Officer.
26. Nottinghamshire, similarly, produced a clear county route map and its own comprehensive series of leaflets.
27. One of the benefits of this approach is that if a particular service changes, only one of the cheap leaflets needs to be replaced. It is noted that there is now an agreement with bus operators to change services only on set days of the year. More joint activity with commercial operators on timetable leaflet production might also be a way of reducing costs.

Plans for improving information provision

28. Given the County Council's relatively poor performance in this area, we asked the Cabinet Member what plans the Council had for improving information provision. He noted that marketing was a key element in passenger transport and that part of the developing integrated passenger transport strategy would include the development of an associated marketing strategy (similar to that run for Project Express in Worcester).

29. However, the Passenger Transport Group had concerns that paper information would become rapidly out of date, due to the fundamental volatility of the network. Although there is an agreement with commercial operators to give 56 days notice to the council before axing a route, this means that any timetable may not be accurate after this time.
30. We recognise this problem and we welcome the holistic marketing used on Project Express. However the Task Group felt strongly that provision should be made for the 64% of residents who want paper timetables and route information. It was also apparent in our discussions with other local authorities that satisfaction with information about services contributed to general satisfaction with bus services overall.
31. We are very pleased that the Passenger Transport Group has succeeded in the difficult task of negotiating with all 6 districts for free countywide (and beyond) bus travel for all over 60's, introduced from 1 April 2006. However, we are concerned about how they will find information on routes across the county, especially as over 80% of over 60's would not even consider using the internet to access information on council services.

Recommendation 1

32. **We recommend that a county route map (in London Underground style) should be produced and promoted as soon as possible. It should include contact phone numbers to customer focussed staff and contain a clear rider that routes may be changed at short notice.**

Recommendation 2

33. **We also recommend that timetable leaflets and a 'Checkmate' type list should be produced, which are cheap and easy to update. These should be available at a specified number of outlets and we recommend staff resources are identified to maintain and update stocks.**
34. We believe that the cost of this would be outweighed by the benefits for the people of Worcestershire and help contribute towards an increase in passenger numbers. It would also go a long way towards improving people's satisfaction with information on bus services, an important measure of the County's performance which can have an effect on levels of government funding.
35. We were impressed by Telford's *Travelink* shop and thought initially one could work well in Worcester City. However given the limited resources available and the development of the Worcestershire Hub, we consider that, rather than creating additional expense of providing a dedicated travel shop in Worcester alone, the Hub would make the ideal point of contact, as long as Hub staff were prepared and kept up to date with timetable changes.

Recommendation 3

36. **We recommend that the Worcestershire Hub should provide information on, or links to, all transport services across the county.**

Recommendation 4

37. **Currently each District has a different contact phone number for the Hub, meaning that a county-wide route map would need six different phone numbers. To make it easier for the public to obtain information, we strongly recommend that a county wide phone number be created for the Hub (in addition to the District based numbers) and clearly advertised on buses and bus information literature and the council's website.**

Bus stops

38. We heard complaints about the lack of shelter at some stops and the absence of information at others.

Information at bus stops

39. The Transport Act 2000 places a duty on County Councils to work in partnership with bus operators to determine what information should be made available to the public and the way it should be distributed. The Act also includes powers to recover reasonable costs from bus operators.
40. Currently in Worcestershire there are about 300 information cases at bus stops that are kept updated by the county council, although there are about 3,500 places where passengers can board. In some cases where commercial services have been withdrawn, the operator has removed bus stop timetable cases. Most bus stops have a bus stop flag where Traveline's phone number is displayed. However there are a number of places that are recognised by drivers as stops but are without a flag.
41. The County Council has to consult with Parishes on putting up bus stop flags, and in some cases Parish Councils do not want them. We were told that if the Council deemed bus stop flags and poles as roadside signage then this consultation would not need to take place. However the task group consider that local input is important.
42. We were pleased to note that the Environmental Services Directorate Performance Plan lists in its 2004/05 achievements that:
- agreement has been reached with bus operators to have joint information on timetables at bus stops; and
 - work is underway to provide new timetable cases at all bus stops, working on a route-by-route basis.

We would encourage Passenger Transport Group to think creatively in driving forward implementation of these objectives as quickly as possible.

43. We found that both Warwickshire and Cambridgeshire employed staff to ensure that clear and up to date information was available at bus stops and feel this should be more wide spread in Worcestershire.

Recommendation 5

44. **We recommend that clear and up to date information is made available and kept updated at bus stops throughout the county. Each bus stop**

(or main stop in a rural area/settlement) should have a flag where appropriate and information case that should include as a minimum, in addition to Traveline, a Hub phone number for information or complaints. The livery should also be clearly recognisable and consistent across the county.

45. People have also complained about a lack of bus information at train stations and we feel strongly that local railways stations should also have bus timetable information (or at the very least a phone number for queries).

Recommendation 6

46. To avoid one person having to tour all bus stops in the county, it would be useful in more rural areas, to have agreements with parishes on upkeep of bus stop information. This worked well in other local authorities, although we were told of the difficulties Passenger Transport staff had sometimes experienced trying to implement such agreements previously. **We recommend that the county council works with parish council clerks to ensure that updated timetables are displayed in at least one main bus stop in each settlement. We encourage Passenger Transport Group staff to seek the help of local members where necessary and think creatively to drive forward improvement should problems arise.**

Bus Shelters

47. We asked the Cabinet Member who should have responsibility for management of information at bus stops, bus stop infrastructure, and maintenance. He advised that, in his view, the Passenger Transport Authority was best placed for this function.
48. The Audit Commission have recently recommended⁷ that Transport Authorities should 'review with other neighbouring local authorities the scope to achieve savings from economies of scale and administrative efficiencies through joint procurement of bus-related infrastructure, such as bus shelters.'
49. We felt strongly that the main issue of concern to residents was the provision of up to date information at bus stops, rather than control of bus shelters and maintenance. However, if the Passenger Transport Group considers that savings could be achieved through joint procurement, we accept that it could be worth reviewing current arrangements with district/parish partners. If successful this would give opportunity for a county livery/badging to be extended.

Performance Management

50. The purpose of performance management is ultimately to improve delivery of services. We deal later with how it is planned to improve services (sections C and E). However the scrutiny task group was interested to know how bus service performance was managed and monitored.

⁷ Delivery Chain Analysis for Bus Services in England, report based on joint study by the Audit Commission and National Audit Office, December 2005

51. First in the Midlands explained that they carry out regular surveys of users and had carried out a limited number of “mystery shopper” exercises. They were aiming to do more of these now that driver recruitment was more stable.
52. In addition, the Traffic Commissioner of the West Midlands has responsibility for the registration of local bus services and can hold public inquiries to consider the possibility of disciplinary action against operators who have not observed the conditions of their licences. Warwickshire County Council had a good relationship with the Traffic Commissioner, which they noted was a tremendous help in monitoring commercial services and any complaints about commercial services. Worcestershire’s relationship is not so well established and we welcome the efforts being made by the Passenger Transport Operations Manager to develop it further.
53. The Council collects the following performance information:
- Passenger numbers (BVPI 102) (annual and monitored monthly)
 - Satisfaction with information (BVPI 103) (measured every 3 years)
 - Satisfaction with services (BVPI 104) (measured every 3 years)
 - Cost per passenger on subsidised services
 - Reliability of services
54. It was explained that, with regards to monitoring subsidised services, a new contracts management team will be placing greater emphasis on operator performance, strategic tendering and compliance with contract conditions and a review of contract conditions is underway. A performance management team has also been set up and is now actively monitoring value for money on cost-based contracts and subsidy-based contracts. The Cabinet Member noted that there needs to be a reasoned and robust business case supporting the subsidy to monitor against.
55. Nottinghamshire County Council has developed a comprehensive set of local performance indicators (PRIDE), attached at Appendix 2. These include, for example, percentage of bus stops with flag and timetable case, and the percentage of the population within a 10-minute walk of an hourly or better bus service. PRIDE was available to all staff through the Intranet and there were clear lines of responsibility for the various indicators. All staff were aware that the purpose of their system was to improve service. Cambridgeshire also highlighted the importance of ensuring that staff were empowered to take action when a performance indicator was falling from target.
56. The Head of Passenger Transport noted that, although local indicators have a place, the focus of the new strategy is towards benefits to individual users and a blanket network offering equality across the County. He explained that they are aiming to develop a minimal number of performance standards based on high quality vehicles, driver attitude and behaviour. For example:
- Length of high frequency networks and population served (a) directly and (b) through feeder services or interchanges;

- Response time to shared taxi services or number of bookings with the plus or minus 15-minute window.

Recommendation 7

- 57. The scrutiny task group considers that it should be clear, as in Nottinghamshire, how and by whom services are to be monitored. We recommend that a more detailed set of local indicators is developed to ensure robust performance monitoring. We welcome the establishment of the performance management team and urge that they have clear ownership of performance and the power to act when standards are slipping.**

Complaints

58. We received evidence that bus users were unhappy with the way their complaints and/or comments were dealt with by the bus operators and by the County Council. In particular people commented on a lack of, or an inadequate, response. There was also a perception by some that their comments were not taken on board and an apparent confusion about who to complain to and where responsibility lay for dealing with complaints.
59. The Passenger Transport Group explained that they record complaints about contracted services, deal with them accordingly and report back to the complainant. It was noted that handling complaints can take up a large part of staff time.
60. There is also a record of all Project Express feedback, including enquiries, complaints, commendations, suggestions or comments. It was suggested that it would be helpful for all Project Express feedback to be channelled through one person who would maintain a database that can record complaints, assign them to the relevant person and produce prompts to chase up / call back residents where necessary.
61. The County Council does not have a statutory responsibility to deal with complaints about commercially operated routes. The official route for these complaints is directly to the bus operator. Should a complaint received by PTG refer to a commercial service it is passed on to the relevant operator, with a note to inform the complainant that this had been done.
62. The Task Group asked to see the actions taken on the comments and complaints sent in as a result of the press release about this scrutiny (attached at Appendix 3). We eventually received a progress report, although it had taken a number of months to collate. The Task Group found that although most of the complaints were handled comprehensively, on occasions a more customer-focused approach from the Passenger Transport Group would be desirable. We believe that the staff may often be too busy to handle passenger enquiries or complaints as fully as bus users may wish.
63. All the local authorities we visited made it clear to the general public that they welcomed feedback and complaints about particular routes. Leaflets contained contact details for customer feedback and complaints passed to

commercial operators were chased up.

64. Some authorities have local user groups, which can help people with complaints, and hold bus users surgeries where necessary. Worcestershire as yet has no such user groups and has been involved in very few surgeries. Some users who attended one surgery in Redditch still felt the operator was not taking on board their views.
65. In our discussions with First it was clear that providing a reliable service had taken priority over customer service provision and dealing with complaints. First had a strong desire for improvement in this area and as such, the possibility of a contribution from First towards a better complaints handling process should be investigated further.
66. We asked the Cabinet Member whether the authority should have a greater role in dealing with customer complaints about commercial operators and were advised that the aim as a Passenger Transport Authority is to ensure customer confidence in the whole Passenger Transport network and therefore a strategic approach to all complaints would be desirable.
67. We also asked whether the tendering process for subsidised services could be used to improve customer care. There was agreement that it should. This is supported by other local authorities contacted⁸ and by central government⁹.
68. We were advised that the recent focus on responsive, rather than proactive, management of tendered routes arising from the downsizing in the bus industry had distracted from a more holistic approach being undertaken. Members were pleased to hear this was corrected in the first major exercise as part of Project Express. When the revised service launched last September it included customer care as an integral part of the process, although members remain concerned about the needs of users throughout the rest of the county.
69. The scrutiny task group considers that the process for handling complaints is confusing. It is not clear who to complain to, and when complaints are passed to the bus operator there is no formal system of follow up action. It appears that the processes are somewhat haphazard with no formal logging/tracking system of complaints handling.
70. We believe that if people knew their comments/complaints were welcomed and acted on, and if they knew who to contact to complain, this would help increase satisfaction levels overall.

Recommendation 8

71. **We recommend that the Passenger Transport Group establishes a robust process for complaints. This would include logging the initial**

⁸ Questionnaire and narrative responses received from nearest neighbour authorities (Appendix 9)

⁹ Recommendations, Delivery Chain Analysis for Bus Services in England, report based on joint study by the Audit Commission and National Audit Office, December 2005

complaint, chasing up responses, and creating a record of the sorts of complaints that are received (eg driver attitude, lack of information, late bus etc) so that trends can be seen and improvements made.

Recommendation 9

- 72. We also recommend that the Worcestershire Hub should be a first port of call for complaints about bus services and would be best placed to log those complaints and chase up replies to users. This emphasises the need for a single county wide telephone number for the Hub (in addition to the existing District based numbers).**

Customer Care

73. The scrutiny task group has concluded that the problems with complaints handling by both the County Council and the bus operator, the lack of information provided to the public about bus services and the lack of public participation in considering new routes, is symptomatic of a poor approach to customer care generally by both the bus operators and the County Council. We understand how the priority of needing to ensure services are provided has overtaken the “softer” priority of providing customer care. However we feel that, if passenger journey numbers are to be increased, it is vital that customer needs are addressed in order to improve the perception of bus services generally.
74. The task group has therefore investigated the possibility of a third party independent organisation, such as Bus Users UK,¹⁰ assisting the County Council in developing its relationship with bus users.
75. The need for such an arrangement in Worcestershire is also supported in a recent study by the Audit Commission, which recommends that the Transport Authority should work with bus operators and other key stakeholders, *including local passenger groups*, to address passengers’ principal concerns about improving the stability of bus timetables and routes, and the quality and reliability of services.¹¹
76. We spoke to the Bus Users UK West Midlands area representative. He felt that Bus Users UK working in Worcestershire would bring the benefit of their general experience of working with bus users, local operators and local authorities. Specifically an agreement could be reached between Bus Users UK and the County Council to develop this in a more dynamic, focused way, initially by:

¹⁰ The aims of Bus Users UK are:

- To strengthen the voice of bus users in the discussion of public transport issues
- To increase the influence of bus passengers on local and national decisions affecting bus services
- To develop good communication between bus companies and their passengers

¹¹ Recommendation I, page 20, Delivery Chain Analysis for Bus Services in England, report based on joint study by the Audit Commission and National Audit Office, December 2005

- More involvement and understanding of local bus users' needs and experiences.
 - Close working relationship with local bus operators, county council officers and elected representatives
 - Establishment of local network of contacts – this could be individuals or small local groups
 - Development of surgeries on a more frequent basis, both in existing centres (such as Worcester, Kidderminster, Redditch) and development of “micro-surgeries” in smaller towns and villages (e.g. Bewdley)
 - Establishment and development of “mystery customer” journeys.
77. The task group found that the Welsh Assembly has funded Bus Users UK (to the tune of £63,000 pa) to:
- gather and reflect the views of bus passengers in Wales
 - provide a contact for all the complaints in Wales whether or not they fall within the remit of the Bus Appeals body.
 - develop and maintain a database of bus passenger complaints in Wales.
 - organise and manage the delivery of bus passenger surgeries in Wales.
 - provide an advice service to local authorities and bus operators in Wales to improve responses to passenger views and to improve service delivery.
 - provide advice as required to the National Assembly for Wales and Ministers of the Welsh Assembly Government, both directly and through the Welsh Transport Forum, on strategic and technical developments related to bus transport.
78. We believe that the Worcestershire Hub is best placed to provide the first point of contact for complaints and information and could maintain a database of complaint types.
79. We consider that the County Council should enter into a pilot agreement to support an independent Bus Users UK officer in the county, initially to organise bus user groups across the county and help the County Council develop its understanding of how to meet customers' needs. Bus Users UK could also advise on the development of a complaints process and help investigate complex complaints in order to help inform that process.
80. Initial enquiries found that one Bus Users UK officer could be funded for £20,000 p.a. pro rata. Office accommodation, furniture, phone, paper and printing costs would be extra, but could be provided alongside the Passenger Transport Group. Details of the proposal with comments and information from Bus Users UK in Wales are attached at Appendix 4.

Recommendation 10

81. **We recommend that the Passenger Transport Group negotiates a pilot arrangement, for say a 6-9 month period (either full time or part time), with Bus Users UK to:**
- **organise bus user groups across the county**

- **help the County Council develop its understanding of how to meet customers needs**
- **advise on the development of a complaints process and investigate complex complaints in order to help form future procedures**
- **carry out mystery shopper exercises, and**
- **at the end of the pilot produce a report on the development of customer care in Worcestershire.**

The funding for this pilot should come from the Passenger Transport Group's existing resources. As commercial operators have expressed a desire to improve in customer care, the possibility of contributions from them should also be investigated.

(b) ARE PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES IN WORCESTERSHIRE GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY?

82. A major focus of this scrutiny was to examine what value for money the County Council is getting for its expenditure and what level of resources are needed to support the developing new strategy. There are a number of ways to assess whether Worcestershire's passenger transport services are achieving value for money.

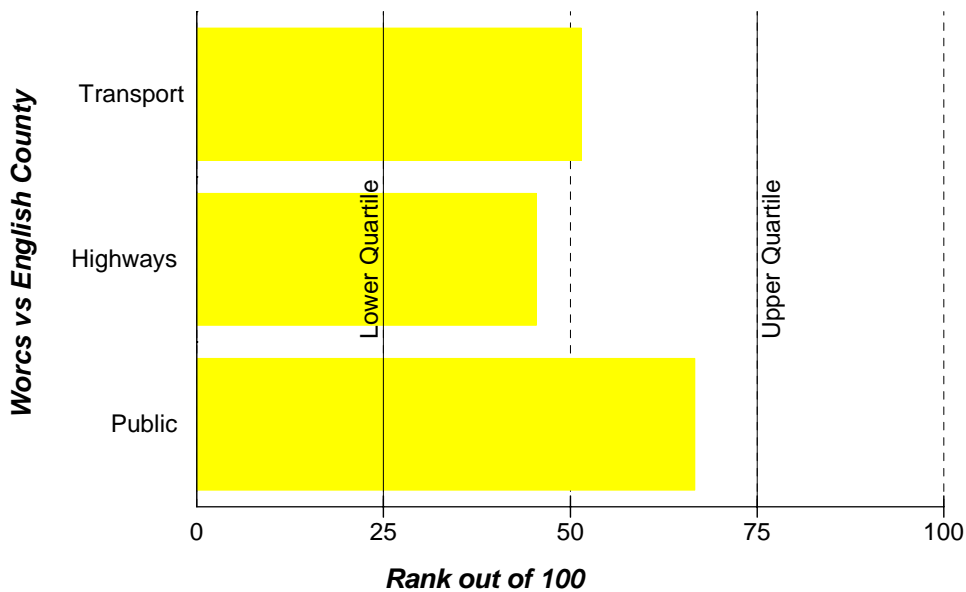
How effectively are we achieving our objectives?

83. Value for money (vfm) can be broadly assessed by considering how effectively service delivery is achieving the service's objectives. Members therefore explored what the key objectives are for passenger transport in Worcestershire.
84. The January 2004 Bus and Information Strategy aimed to develop a three-tier strategy which provides for a basic minimum level of service within reasonable walking distance of households across the County. However, during the scrutiny members found that this strategy is not yet fully implemented and, in effect, these objectives have been suspended whilst the Joint Members' Passenger Transport Forum develop an Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy. This new strategy is expected to be published next year.
85. Although the broad aims of the emerging new strategy have been described (see para 130), there are as yet no precisely defined objectives. We discuss the developing Integrated Transport Strategy in more detail in section (c).
86. Service objectives can be achieved in a number of ways, for example by providing subsidised routes, by encouraging more commercial routes, by encouraging people to use passenger transport, or by publicising the services. The scrutiny has therefore looked at alternative ways of supporting passenger transport, rather than just by subsidising bus services. This is discussed in more detail in section (e).

How do we compare with others?

87. Value for money can also be assessed by comparing Worcestershire's expenditure and performance with other local authorities.
88. Some data on satisfaction and spend per head of population is already available via the Best Value Performance Indicators and through Value for Money profile reports, provided by the Audit Commission, to assist with the value for money element of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. This showed that in 2004/05 Worcestershire's expenditure on passenger transport was above average compared to all county councils (in the third quartile).

**Expenditure on public transport
Audit Commission's Value For Money Profile Report 2004/05**



89. However, the task group found that there are some health warnings on these figures used by ODPM. Care needed to be taken that local authorities had not compiled their spend figures differently, incorporating for example, education and social services transport spend in passenger transport spending, or not including grant funding.
90. As it is vital to ensure that comparisons are carried out on a like for like basis, a questionnaire was sent to all Worcestershire's 20 "nearest neighbour" local authorities (i.e. those which are statistically closest to us), in order to get behind the BVPI data and information provided to the Audit Commission, and to provide a more detailed and up to date comparison.
91. We are grateful to the seven local authorities that kindly responded to the questionnaire and the table on the next page compares the data.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT COMPARISON - NEAREST NEIGHBOUR SAMPLE

	Worcs	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
a Net Spend on passenger transport 05/06 £000	4,220	4,360	2,746	4,070	5,100	7,088	2,519	4,721 ¹²
b Spend on subsidised services 05/06 £000	3,269	3,200	2,420	2,650	5,047	5,230	1,700	3,354
c Specific Grants Total 05/06 £000	1,069	1,386	1,827	1,580	1,862	3,511	4,085	1,432
Rural Bus Subsidy Grant	1,069	840	1,275	880	1,481	1,761	1,286	
Rural Bus Challenge	-	260	413	-	381	392	2,364	
KickStart	-	-	-	700	-		435	
Urban Bus Challenge	-	286	-	-	-	169		
Other eg PCT and DC contribution			139					
Community Transport						1,189		
d Spend on Pass. Trnsprt gross of specific grants (a+c)	5,289	5,746	4,573	5,650	6,962	10,599	6,604	6,153
e Population (mid 2004)	552,000	757,700	445,150	623,900	619,800	1,300,000	572,791	678,700
f Total spend on passenger transport / head of pop £								
04/05 (mid 2003 pop)	9.45	19.20 ¹³	10.29	9.09	9.83	n/a	7.66	11.44
05/06 (mid 2004 pop) (d/e)	9.58	7.58	10.27	9.06	11.23	8.15	11.53	9.07
g Spend on subsidy per head of pop £ 05/06 (b/e)	5.92	4.22	5.44	4.25	8.14	4.02	2.97	4.94
h Av cost of subsidised services / passenger journey £	1.27	5.34	1.37	1.04	1.58	1.38	2.99 ¹⁴	1.14
Total passenger journeys (million)								
03/04	13.64	26.16	8.76	15.10	34.77	37.85	16.00	20.11
i 04/05 (latest available)	13.02	29.28	9.29	15.00	34.49	37.50	16.70	20.10
j Average cost per passenger journey 05/06 (d/i)	0.41	0.22	0.67	0.38	0.20	0.24	0.40	0.31
k Passenger journeys per head of population (i/e)	23.59	38.64	20.87	24.04	55.65	28.85	29.16	29.62

¹² Total of £3354k + £1367k

¹³ includes spend on education and social care transport

¹⁴ average of £2.47 urban routes, £3.50 rural routes

Total spend on passenger transport

92. Worcestershire's total spend on passenger transport per head of population in 2005/06 (row f) is £9.58. This is only just above the £9.56 mean of our sample of seven other county councils. Although this is a smaller sample than used by the Audit Commission, it is encouraging that Worcestershire's total spend per head is not out of line with nearest neighbours.

Spend on subsidised services

93. Worcestershire's spend per head on subsidised services (row g) is the second highest of the sample, although the range of spending levels is wide. Closer analysis of subsidy spend reveals that Worcestershire spends 77.5% of its total passenger transport budget on subsidised services. This is the third highest proportion in the sample and indicates that other local authorities may be spending their budgets in ways other than subsidising bus services.

94. Average cost of subsidised services per passenger journey (row h) gives an indication of the efficiency of the authority's subsidy. Currently Worcestershire's average on cost-based contracts is £1.27 per passenger, which is under the £2 threshold used by most local authorities to decide which routes to subsidise. If authority A's relatively high cost is excluded from the calculation, Worcestershire remains just below the mean of £1.30. Although, high subsidy costs might reflect that the subsidy is for long, remote journeys.

Passenger journey numbers

95. In terms of what we are getting for our money, the BVPI on total passenger journeys in 2003/04 showed a relatively low number of passenger journeys were undertaken in Worcestershire. This position has not improved in 2004/05 (latest available figures); in our comparison Worcestershire had the second lowest numbers of passenger journeys.

96. In order to take population differences into account, it is interesting to look at the total passenger journeys per head of population (row k). This shows that there are 23.59 journeys per head of population in Worcestershire, the average (mean) is 31.3 journeys per head of population.

97. However the 2004/05 figures do not include the recent increases generated by Project Express in Worcester. Passenger journeys on Project Express services were reported to Cabinet in February 2006 as 110% higher than for the Park & Ride services over the equivalent period in 2004/05. On an annualised basis this equates to over 500,000 additional passenger journeys. Total bus passenger journeys are given below.

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Total Passenger Journeys (million)	13.64	13.02	13.2*
<i>excluding 0.5m Project Express journeys</i>			12.7

*forecast

98. The table shows that, although there is an upward trend forecast for 2005/06, if the expected effect of Project Express in Worcester is subtracted there continues to be an underlying decline across the rest of the County.

Average cost per passenger journey

99. Total passenger journeys is of course largely determined by commercial activity whereas the total spend figure is only the authorities' spend and does not include the operators' spend.
100. This leads to some questions about row j (average cost per passenger journey). An authority spending a lot on an inefficient subsidised network carrying few passengers will appear efficient if it has good commercial network coverage and a high number of passenger journeys. Whereas an authority spending a smaller amount on subsidised services carrying a lot of passengers, may appear inefficient if it has a smaller overall number of commercial journeys.
101. However, row j does give an *indication* of the effectiveness of the passenger transport system. For example one authority (authority A) enjoys much higher numbers of passenger journeys (row i), but their spend on passenger transport is similar to Worcestershire's (rows a,b). Row j therefore indicates that there is something about that authority area that makes it much more commercially attractive to operators (eg whether the infrastructure is better, whether passenger information is better etc), although we cannot deduce exactly what from the table. What we can see is the authority does not have to spend much to secure that level of passenger journeys.

Satisfaction

102. Unfortunately it has not been possible to carry out an up to date comparison of satisfaction with services and information as these BVPIs are based on triennial surveys and more recent data was not available from our sample.

Conclusion

103. We asked the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for his view of the authority's current value for money on its spending on passenger transport. He felt it was well managed in the light of its challenging environment and improving. However he agreed that the opportunity for a step change in value for money is the next challenge.
- 104. The scrutiny has found that the picture is more complex than initially indicated in the Audit Commission's value for money profiles. Although spend on subsidy is still relatively high and the passenger journeys relatively low, the overall spend on passenger transport is about average in the sample we have compared.**

What value for money is Worcestershire County Council getting from bus subsidies?

105. Worcestershire County Council's spend on subsidised bus services is set out overleaf.

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Net spend on bus subsidies £000	2,355	2,698	2,449	3,269*

*budget figure (not actual spend)

106. The scrutiny task group obtained a list of subsidy contracts (attached at Appendix 5). Information on the costs of each contract was also made available to members. There are 182 subsidy contracts and the cost of each contract to the council can be broken down as follows:

Contract Cost to Council £	No of subsidy contracts
<5,000	46
5,000 – 9,999	35
10,000 – 49,999	74
50,000 – 99,999	21
100,000 – 199,999	5
200,000 +	1

107. The Audit Commission recently reviewed the fitness for purpose of bus subsidies.¹⁵ Their report recommended that Transport Authorities review the unit cost of subsidy for supported bus services and the cost-effectiveness of their procurement approach.

108. In order to assess whether the money spent on subsidies is good value for money, the following information was obtained for a sample of routes:

- The criteria for deciding which services should be subsidised, and how the amount of subsidy that will be provided is agreed.
- The cost per passenger journey for each contract
- If the route had been axed as a commercial route, the cost per passenger journey before it was axed, then after it was subsidised.
- Passenger numbers for the route.
- How often the service runs.
- Proof of the need to subsidise a particular route.
- How was the success of subsidised routes measured – what data was available.

109. The Task Group requested that the sample include replaced routes; dropped routes; perceived to be failing subsidised routes; and successful subsidised routes and the detailed information is attached at Appendix 6.

110. It became clear during the subsequent discussions that there was no available data, such as the purpose of the journey, or the convenience of alternatives, to quantify the benefits of the subsidised services and that

¹⁵ Delivery Chain Analysis for Bus Services in England, report based on joint study by the Audit Commission and National Audit Office, December 2005

therefore decisions on their worth could only be subjective. There was also a lack of clear criteria that had been used to determine the decision to subsidise a service (see section below).

111. In addition, for many of the contracts, the cost per passenger journey could not be calculated due to a lack of information on passenger numbers being supplied by operators to the County Council. Until recently, operators only provided passenger numbers on cost based contracts (where the County Council keep fares revenue), not for subsidy-based contracts (where the operator keeps the fares revenue). However, as stated previously, this situation has now changed with operators being required to provide passenger numbers on all contracts and also being requested to provide monthly returns on commercial routes.
112. **The scrutiny task group did not find evidence for or against bus subsidies overall being good value for money. Given the relatively high cost per passenger for some routes members agreed that in some cases alternatives to buses might be more appropriate.**
113. The level of resources needed for the new strategy is addressed in section (c) from para 139.

How do we decide which services to subsidise?

114. The Scrutiny task group was keen to establish how decisions were taken to subsidise services, particularly given the large number of commercial services withdrawn in the last few years and the subsequent subsidising of some of these.
115. There was a perception that the bus operators had been able to withdraw commercial services safe in the knowledge that the service would then be subsidised by the County Council.
116. Some members were also concerned that the bus operator can inform the County Council that a service was no longer profitable (and hence possibly then receive a subsidy for that service if the tender was won), but they did not have to provide (and neither did the County Council have the right to ask for) any data to support this claim.
117. Clearly a bus operator would not want to remove a service on which it was making money, but members felt that any lack of transparency would not help to build trust between the organisations. We therefore welcome the development towards the sharing of information about subsidy-based contracts from First. It is understood that it has been hard to collect accurate information about services, but it is expected that the introduction of smart cards will considerably improve this situation.
118. We asked how many services had been withdrawn and subsequently subsidised and which operators had been successful in those tenders.
119. It was explained that in the last five years there had been 141 commercial bus service deregistrations. Of these only 29 services were tendered as a

subsidised service, 21 of which had been formerly operated by First and the remainder operated by other operators. Of the 21 formerly operated by First, 10 were then awarded to First with the remaining 11 awarded to other operators. First were successful in winning 2 of the tenders that were previously operated by someone else commercially.

120. With regard to the 112 services that were not tendered, we were told that this was for a variety of reasons including:
- (a) a similar service existed;
 - (b) a similar replacement service was operated commercially;
 - (c) patronage was poor and alternative options were available; and
 - (d) budgetary restrictions and alternative options were available.

However members noted that members and the public's views had not been taken into account when these decisions were made.

121. The scrutiny task group tried to explore further the criteria being used by the Council to determine which services are subsidised. This seemed to be particularly difficult as it became clear that there were no transparent, objective criteria. Members were concerned that the decision-making process that had been followed over the last few years appeared rather ambiguous and possibly subjective.
122. Nottinghamshire County Council, by contrast, uses a Performance Management Framework system to enable objective decisions to be made on subsidising services. This was developed after they were faced with budget cuts and needed to compare the value of services. Each service is scored using criteria such as cost per passenger journey, index of multiple deprivation, reason for journey, availability of other forms of transport and levels of car ownership. The full list of criteria and scoring system are attached at Appendix 7.
123. The Task Group was impressed by the comprehensiveness and objectivity of Nottinghamshire's process. Some of the data needed for such a system (such as accessibility of services) may already be available in Worcestershire from the Council's Research and Intelligence Unit. However members recognised that the Nottinghamshire model is data hungry and could be resource intensive.

Recommendation 11

- 124. We recommend that objective and transparent criteria for determining which services are subsidised are drawn up, in consultation with bus quality partnerships and the integrated Joint Members' Passenger Transport Forum. They should be clearly based on the objectives of the developing strategy.**

Recommendation 12

- 125. We also recommend that a clear process for decision-making on subsidised services is established, incorporating elements of the Nottinghamshire Performance Management Framework approach. This process should include consultation with local members.**

(c) WILL THE PLANNED FUTURE PROVISION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT IMPROVE QUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY, ACCESS, AND INFORMATION?

126. The scrutiny task group wanted to explore what was being done to increase passenger numbers to meet the Department for Transport target to increase passenger journey numbers by more than 12% in England by 2010, compared to 2000.¹⁶ In addition, members were aware of the development of the Worcester Project Express and that a new vision for passenger transport was being planned. Members therefore wanted to establish whether this new vision would meet the needs of the public and help improve the quality and affordability of bus services.

Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy

127. The Worcestershire Bus and Information Strategy is intended to be replaced with a performance based Joint Worcestershire Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy.

128. The new strategy will have the key objectives of delivering effective integrated passenger transport, and providing a high quality travelling experience for users to encourage modal shift from car to passenger transport. It will be based on a network of high quality, high frequency¹⁷ Express Bus Services linking key towns, cities, health, employment, education, retail and tourist facilities and destinations in Worcestershire. Key interchange hubs will be provided on the network enabling people to access the services by a variety of transport modes, including feeder bus, taxibus, and demand responsive transport such as shared taxi services, or on foot and by cycle and by car (either as a driver or passenger).

129. *Project Express* in Worcester has been developed as a 'Proof of Concept' of this new approach. The concept includes:

- **Customer Service** – Friendly, customer focussed staff at interchange sites and on the buses;
- **Vehicles** – High quality, low floor, single deck buses, with potential use of articulated buses such as "StreetCar" on high volume routes. The new vehicles will represent a step-change in quality and image in comparison with existing buses;
- **Interchange Facilities** – The facilities for passenger and operators at major interchange hubs must be consistent with the aim of providing a world-class level of service;
- **Route Infrastructure** – The Project Express bus services will operate on a limited stop basis between the interchanges and the city centre. The services will stop only at key locations such as interchange hubs, the Worcestershire Royal Hospital and railway stations. High quality facilities and information systems will be provided for passengers at these key stops;

¹⁶ Department for Transport Annual Report 2005, Chapter 5 para 5.4

¹⁷ i.e. minimum 3 buses per hour in inter-urban areas, 6 buses per hour in urban areas

- **Information and Marketing** – Reliable and accessible information on the Project Express services, timetables and fares will be provided. The service will be actively promoted within its target markets; and
- **Simple and Effective Pricing** – Easily understandable ticket pricing, integrated with other passenger transport services, including local bus, express coach, rail and taxibus/shared taxi services.

130. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility explained that the vision is that anyone, anywhere in the County, should be able to travel to anywhere else in the County (and its neighbouring areas) within a reasonable time¹⁸ and at a reasonable cost using Passenger Transport.

131. The aim is that passenger transport will become a mode of choice and play an increasingly important role in the lives of everyone living, working and visiting the county. It will move from being a means of transport aimed at people without the means or ability to use a car, to become a key part of an integrated transport system, where the dominance of the car is complemented by alternative passenger transport that can overcome congestion and air quality black spots and cost effectively serve previously hard-to-reach areas of the County (by Demand Responsive Transport). This will enable lifestyle choices (such as switching personal spending from capital based car investment into revenue based travel expenditure), resulting in a shift in personal expenditure from the car to passenger transport.

132. Members had a number of questions about the proposed strategy.

Is it a Worcester-only strategy?

133. It is recognised that, under the Regional Spatial Strategy Worcester is designated as a Sub Regional Focus for development and therefore does have a certain priority within the County. However Members were concerned that the strategy appears to be focussed on Worcester City, and only a small part of Worcester at that. The Head of Passenger Transport explained that the emerging strategy is mainly about equitability of service provision across the County. It is expected that other pilots will be rolled out depending on the success in Worcester and available funding. One plan currently being discussed was a core route linking the three hospitals of Worcester, Pershore and Evesham, fed by taxi or taxi/bus. Nonetheless we are still concerned that as yet there are no plans for pilots in the rest of the county.

How long will it take to implement?

134. The Task Group questioned whether the strategy could be completed within a reasonable timescale. The Head of Waste and Passenger Transport Management suggested that a core route and feeder routes could be set up in a district say within a 12 month period and the whole of the county could be covered within 5 years. This seems fairly ambitious.

¹⁸ We asked what was meant by a “reasonable” time, response given was “for example within one or two hours of request, or at a specified time slot (e.g. plus or minus 15 minutes on early pre-booking).”

How will it be paid for?

135. The scrutiny task group was keen to find out how much the emerging strategy will cost and whether the Council can afford it. We therefore asked the Cabinet Member with Responsibility how it was intended to pay for the strategy. He set out the following planned approach.
136. The main network of high quality, high frequency Express Bus Services will be either commercial or subsidised services within a given budget.
137. The feeder services will be based on a network of shared taxis, which will be a known cost. These will provide a level of service relating to demand; however, there could perhaps be a three tier system:
- a) Basic service (lowest cost to user, highest subsidy - response time dependent on demand) at a level provided by a fixed number of shared taxis (£X000 fixed cost per vehicle)
 - b) Secondary service (higher cost to user with a specified level of service - say within one hour, but with lower subsidy) with the number of taxis relating to demand (£X-Y000 fixed cost per vehicle)
 - c) Full commercial service (but to Passenger Transport Authority standards) as soon as possible (within 30 minutes say at full commercial cost).
138. It is also intended that bus priority measures (such as bus lanes) will be further developed to facilitate the predetermined performance in terms of journey times.
139. We tried to establish whether there were any figures available to go with the plans.
140. With regards to the first element, Project Express in Worcester, it was reported to Cabinet in February 2006 that the cost of the subsidy for the Worcester City Project Express is expected to be in the order of £250,000 per annum. In order to afford the next stage of the project, this subsidy will need to be reduced to a minimal level by increasing passenger numbers. It has been assumed that there will be a one-off increase in revenue during the year following the implementation of bus priority measures (2008), and it is forecasted that revenue will then continue to increase up to 2010. The forecast revenue for 2010 is over 50% higher than that forecast for 2008.¹⁹
141. The success of the extension of Project Express rests on the development of bus priority measures and, in Worcester, on new park and ride sites. These, and other infrastructure, will have significant capital costs. It is also possible that the development of the park and ride sites could carry some risks and potential delays (for example if planning permission is not granted).
142. We are also aware of the £3.5million Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns grant and that part of this is used for marketing and information of the "Choose how you move" project (of which Project Express is also a part).

¹⁹ Revenue Forecast Summary, Table 1.1, Feb 2006 Cabinet report Appendix 2

143. We asked whether figures were available for the costs of the proposed feeder services/taxishare. It was explained that, as this is a live project, the scope and how it might be implemented were still being defined. Thus at present the costs are not available.
144. It is currently unclear whether concessionary fares will be available on all these feeder services. Under the new strategy there will be fewer “traditional” bus routes and if concessionary fares are not available on the new feeder services we are concerned that this will exacerbate social exclusion and accessibility to services could worsen. The scrutiny task group considers that, in order to ensure equitable services for all, concessionary fares must be available on the majority of feeder services.
145. The vision behind the emerging strategy is of integrated delivery of all passenger transport services, ie public, educational and social services transport. The net annual expenditure on passenger transport is £23 million per annum. The management of passenger transport has been integrated, but separate budgets exist for public, educational and social services transport and services are provided discretely. This enables each directorate to identify the costs arising from their activities.
146. It is vital that each sector achieve value for money in their transport activities. To help with this, Adult and Community Services Directorate has established a Transport in 2005/06 Project, which is looking at how to deliver more reliable, flexible and appropriate transport services tailored to social services users’ individual needs. The project is developing a service level agreement between Adult and Community Services Directorate and Passenger Transport Group. Its priorities for the future include re-structuring social services transport budgets so that transport is managed and operated more locally.

Recommendation 13

147. The vision for integrated delivery of passenger transport services should enable public transport, education transport, and social care transport to see improved value for money. Members recognise that all Directorates will want to continue to control their own budgets. However the planning and delivery of services will need to be integrated in order to achieve the potential savings which will help the emerging strategy to be rolled out. **We therefore recommend that planning and delivery of all passenger transport services is integrated, enabling Directorates to maintain their own budgets but with the Head of Passenger Transport able to use the money in the most flexible, cost effective way. The issue of integrating budgets is complex and might be suitable for further scrutiny in future.**
148. **The scrutiny task group strongly supports the vision at the heart of the proposed integrated passenger transport strategy and welcomes the business plan approach to the establishment of Project Express in Worcester. The task group also welcomes the Project Express model being rolled out across the county and looks forward to receiving a**

detailed timescale for this and the implementation of the whole strategy.

149. However the task group has a number of concerns about the integrated passenger transport strategy:

- **lack of clarity over funding the strategy,**
- **the ambitious timescales for roll out,**
- **the ambitious forecasts for passenger number increases,**
- **possible difficulties getting bus priority measures (eg bus lanes) in place,**
- **the possible difficulties with the development of new park and ride sites,**
- **the lack of a timescale for the purchase of high quality, low floor buses,**
- **the current lack of detailed estimated costs for the feeder services and the costs of expansion of the vision across the county,**
- **some uncertainty about whether concessionary fares would be available on feeder services,**
- **the lack of pooled budgets in passenger transport group so far, and**
- **the risk of creating more social exclusion if the aims of the strategy are not achieved.**

Recommendation 14

150. The emerging Integrated Transport Strategy will need strong and committed leadership, in particular from members in both county and districts. However we need reassurance about just how achievable the aims of the strategy are; the concept needs underpinning by a sound business case. It is vital therefore that detailed plans, including estimated costs, budgets and timescales, are developed. We urge the Joint Members' Passenger Transport Forum to work as quickly as possible to establish these. We recommend that the Cabinet Member provides a progress report to Council on how these plans are developing.

Joint Members' Passenger Transport Forum

151. The Joint Members Passenger Transport Forum, made up of county and district councillors (one from each district) is the body through which the emerging new passenger transport strategy will be developed. The County Council is represented on the Forum by John Smith (Chairman), Cabinet Member with Responsibility, and his Advisor Rob Banks.

152. This developing strategy is seeking to change significantly the way passenger transport is provided and funded across the county, with a possible total annual spend of £23million (05/06 approx). Whilst recognising the important contribution made by Districts, members were concerned that there is very little official county councillor involvement in what is, after all, an important service affecting a large number of residents,

involving a significant slice of the budget.

Recommendation 15

153. We realise that each Cabinet in county and districts will have to approve and sign up to the new strategy (and the subsequent spending required to implement it) but **recommend that more opportunities should be available for county councillors to have an input into the strategy at an earlier stage.**
154. Further recommendations about the future of passenger transport services are made in section (e).
155. Worcestershire County Council has received a number of grants to pump-prime or establish services. However, during our discussions with other local authorities it became clear that they felt it was a mistake to use grants to set up routes that were not financially sustainable in the long term, as a great deal of disruption and annoyance was caused when a service was withdrawn. Passenger Transport Group agreed with this and noted they now only apply for grants where there is a business case to sustain the service after the end of the grant.

(d) WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON PREVIOUS SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS?

156. We received a report on progress on actions taken since the previous scrutiny report on bus services (September 2003) attached at Appendix 8. The report's key recommendations and actions can be summarised as follows:

- developing a county/district working party to take forward a countywide concessionary fare scheme - this has been successfully accomplished;
- further investigation into home to school transport alongside community transport should take place at a later stage - work has been done on this, some as part of Project Express, and will be developed as part of the new strategy;
- smartcards – the Department is working to introduce these in future; and
- Bus Quality Partnerships – work continues in the form of a review to assess the effectiveness and purpose.

157. **We are satisfied that the issues raised in the previous scrutiny report have been properly addressed.**

(e) HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR SERVICES/VALUE FOR MONEY?

158. The scrutiny task group explored the different ways that the passenger transport capital and revenue budget could be spent in order to secure service improvements.

Council owned buses

159. Warwickshire had their own fleet of (about 40) buses, some of which were branded in different ways.

160. Their 'School Links' brand was created by a strong desire in the County Council to reduce costs and improve the quality of school transport. They had begun in 2002/03 by purchasing about half a dozen buses and now have eleven. The benefits of purchasing them were:

- the ability to specify quality and volume of buses (each had 70 seats, double and triple spacing)
- specified livery - County colours provided a real presence
- additional income was generated as the buses were let out for education related private hire
- overall costs were reduced further as owning their own buses had a knock-on effect leading to commercial operators tendering lower prices for other home to school routes
- tenders allowed greater control over route and frequency
- revenue spending was reduced as buses were purchased using capital funding mainly from the integrated block transport with some money from education transport.

161. They also created a new 'County routes' brand, for which they purchased a fleet of around half a dozen buses using local transport plan funding for quality vehicles. On another key route buses were also used by Social Services Day Care and used as taxi buses at night to link leisure and night time activity accessibility.

162. There were 11 flexi buses, again in County colours, which served isolated areas and some of which had care attendants with them. Cost savings were achieved as these buses also ran the SEN Education Transport Service.

163. It is clear that considerable savings on revenue spending, as well as other benefits can be realised by owning a fleet and using it flexibly. We therefore conclude that Worcestershire should emulate this policy where feasible.

Recommendation 16

164. We recommend that Passenger Transport Group look further into the feasibility of purchasing its own fleet for flexible and combined use as appropriate, as described in Warwickshire.

Community based provision

165. An example of how Parishes or Communities could club together and

provide their own transport needs was the Martley Parish Bus Service, funded previously by the Countryside Agency.

166. The Martley Parish Bus Service was to provide opportunities for villagers to travel into the city centre in the evenings, and at weekends, providing access to leisure and entertainment.
167. The task group initially thought community based provision would be an effective way to deliver services but the difficulty is financial sustainability and responsibility for service delivery.
168. The Council must strive to ensure equality of transport provision across the county. We therefore support local initiatives where they are cost effective and sustainable but feel that the new county wide strategy must in the long term provide transport accessible to all.
169. A recent strategy workshop run by the Transport Operations Research Group (TORG) into the future development of Demand Responsive Transport, found that more integration between commercial bus, taxi, local authority fleets, health and more promotion for end users was required

Community transport's role

170. Community Transport (CT) schemes are set up to serve people who do not have access to conventional transport or are unable to use it.
171. We spoke to Sally Ellison, the chief officer of Worcester Volunteer Centre.²⁰ She told us that community transport services were currently operating at full capacity, largely due to an increase in NHS work and problems recruiting volunteer drivers. They therefore currently had no capacity to extend social provision to other groups (eg young mothers).
172. We found there was a lack of consistency of provision across the county in terms of fare pricing and range and distance of service area. Another issue of concern was whether the County Council or Community Transport (CT) should be responsible for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for volunteer drivers.
173. However, the principle of volunteering was felt to be important for the community and Members commended the work of the volunteers.
174. Alec Kendall, South Worcestershire Primary Care Trust Development Manager, advised that with investment, the development of a cadre of paid drivers to reinforce the body of volunteer drivers and the shedding of restrictive licensing conditions and eligibility criteria, the CT sector could take its place in a modernised local network that offers ultimate flexibility of payment, route, mode and time of trips to health and social care. The single mother with a baby to take to and from a clinic in the local market town is as entitled to a community transport opportunity as the elderly patient with

²⁰ (See summary in Appendix 1, under heading 23 January 06)

mobility problems – both are at risk of exclusion, yet the single mother is unlikely to access the CT service under present conditions.

175. He made the point that the practice among some schemes of working within district boundaries is not keeping pace with the needs of passengers. For these reasons, it may be difficult to market Community Transport to new passengers in new settings with new needs.
176. We found in Cambridgeshire that 90% of rural transport was provided through community transport services. It was felt that a good Community Transport Scheme should be able to provide a service for about £6.00 per passenger.
177. We asked how open was their Community Transport Scheme to suggested changes. Cambridgeshire found that funding through the Countryside Agency had made the Community Transport Service Providers much more receptive to changing how they tackled service provision and the need for data collection.
178. We agree that a modernised, attractive and flexible transport system is essential to offering real travel choice to patients and residents alike. Integration of systems is at the heart of these improvements, and non-emergency travel to healthcare is a prime example of where flexibility is essential.
179. We conclude that community transport does provide a niche for some not able to use public transport and would encourage the expansion of more inclusive eligibility criteria and cross boundary journeys. However, we understand their difficulties and fully support the emerging strategy that aims to inclusively provide flexible travel opportunities for all.

Increasing passenger numbers

180. As previously mentioned, the scrutiny task group welcomed the holistic approach to marketing services employed for Project Express. However, members felt that the marketing of bus services could be improved and that this might help improve passenger journey numbers. In our discussion with Ian Humphries (Managing Director of First in the Midlands) he explained that there was little room for the development of brand new commercially viable routes. It was agreed that it would be relatively easy to market simple, straightforward routes and timetables (such as the key routes envisaged in the new strategy).

Relationship with commercial bus operators

181. The recent history of bus services in Worcestershire, mostly operated by First in the Midlands, has been difficult. A significant number of commercial services were withdrawn over a short period of time, in line with a national trend, and this crisis led to dissatisfaction with services generally and a strained relationship with the County Council.

182. We therefore asked the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for his views on the current relationship with First in the Midlands. He felt it had improved significantly since the arrival of Ian Humphries as Managing Director. The First network has generally stabilised and agreement as to change dates and improved notice of strategic intentions now takes place. He noted that when serious difficulties had arisen, as two years ago in Redditch, the company had been open and transparent in providing information to enable informed decisions to be made and regular data on passenger numbers is now furnished, improving the county council's forecasting and tracking of the Passenger Transport network.
183. Ian Humphries agreed that the relationship with the county council was good, and that it was particularly open and frank compared to some relationships with other local authorities.
184. This is welcome news and needs to be built on. All of the local authorities that we visited stressed the importance of having an effective working relationship with the main bus operator in order to provide good quality services. They highlighted the benefits of:
- Developing mutual understanding of aims
 - Having a joint ambition to achieve excellent service
 - Council supporting the operator (eg with infrastructure investment)
 - Holding regular meetings with stakeholders
 - Developing agreements (eg on data-sharing).
185. In Telford and Cambridgeshire, relationships worked well partly because of the creative and aspirational personalities driving forward improvements and partly because council staff had, in the beginning, brought positive proposals (ie bus priority measures) to the table and also helped their commercial operator with developing a business case for particular routes.
186. We therefore discussed with Mr Humphries what the key issues were facing the industry at the moment. He noted that operators had faced rising costs (7.5% before the recent increase in fuel) due to increases in wages (to reduce driver turnover) and fuel prices and investment in new stock. We asked him about his vision for the future for his company. He explained that his aim was the successful operation of services in Worcestershire and similar areas and he pointed out that First's core business was in the metropolitan areas. The scrutiny task group consider that this is an indication that Worcestershire's needs are rather peripheral to First's main ambitions.
187. We raised the issue of concerns about the bus station in Kidderminster. Mr Humphries explained that bus stations were costly to commercial operators and not necessarily what users wanted. He felt heated shelters and bus bays in the right place could be more suitable in some circumstances.
188. He also explained that concessionary fares was still an issue of concern as the generation factor (the calculation to ensure that commercial operators made no more or less as a result of increased passenger numbers) was originally designed for half fare concessions which had allowed some

increase in profit for carrying extra passengers. The new scheme expected operators to carry more passengers for little or no gain and was perceived as unfair by operators.

Recommendation 17

189. Clearly an effective working relationship at the top level of the organisations, and a mutual desire to improve bus services, are the key to success. **We recommend that the Cabinet Member with Responsibility provides an update on the development of the relationship with bus operators in his annual report to Council.**
190. We recognise that when profit margins are tight, operators will want to reduce costs wherever possible. **We consider that, in order to develop an effective relationship, it is vital that the County Council, including members, understand the commercial pressures that operators face.**
191. We found in other local authorities that this initial understanding was also backed up by practical support by the local authority. In Telford there was an effective and productive partnership between the authority and the operator, which they showed had resulted in improvements in the quality of bus services. In Cambridgeshire, the Head of Passenger Transport felt that the Council should do what it can to facilitate operators making profits. Commercial services may, in some instances, have to be supplemented by sponsored services, but it is possible to contain expenditure growth while meeting accessibility targets if operators are making money.

Bus priority measures

192. We asked Mr Humphries what sort of practical steps the Council could take to support the operator in this way. He noted that bus priority measures were essential to reduce unproductive journey time (and hence reduce costs), and improve service reliability. He felt that commercial operators would be encouraged to invest more in new vehicles for transport corridors if such measures were implemented.
193. The Secretary of State for Transport, in his recent speech to the Confederation of Passenger Transport said that local authorities “need to plan and manage their road networks. So that people can make the trips they want without being caught up in more and more congestion. That means amongst other things more demand management, more priority for buses.”²¹
194. We saw in Telford and Cambridgeshire how fairly radical bus priority measures had been implemented to the benefit of the operator, the council and bus users.
195. Furthermore, as was reported to Cabinet in February 2006, without the implementation of additional bus priority measures it is forecast that the

²¹ Speech by Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to the Confederation of Passenger Transport. 26 January 2006.

implementation of Phases 2 and 3 of Project Express will result in overall annual operating deficits in excess of the target of £250,000 per annum.

196. Clearly there is a need to balance the potentially conflicting priorities of cars, local parking and bus priority. To achieve this balance it is essential to have close working between the Passenger Transport Group and Highway Network Management.
197. In Cambridgeshire links between Highway Network Management and their Passenger Transport Group were well established with co-location and joint membership of their Bus Development Board (an informal Members' Panel acting as a sounding board for passenger transport issues) and their Bus Quality Partnership. We are concerned that in Worcestershire, Highways and Passenger Transport are working in isolation from each other with different priorities.
- 198. Implementing bus priority measures is unpopular and difficult. However they will be essential if the operators are to be able to run regular and reliable services. Investing in them will enable the Council to improve value for money in bus services, as satisfaction and the commercial viability of some routes are likely to increase.**
- 199. If the Council is to take practical steps to expand the developing strategy across the county (ie implementing bus priority measures) there needs to be:**
- **the same kind of creativity and energy in Worcestershire as we saw in Telford and Cambridgeshire,**
 - **shared priorities and understanding between passenger transport and highways,**
 - **a two-way relationship with the bus operator – if priority measures are established, they must provide the promised bus service,**
 - **strong political leadership, and**
 - **a close partnership between the county and districts.**

Bus quality partnerships

200. Members were concerned about the success of Bus Quality Partnerships and lack of attendance by commercial operators, and welcome the review to assess the effectiveness and purpose. It is very much hoped this will lead to improved relationships between the county, districts, commercial operators and users.
201. In Telford too, the relationship with the main commercial operator had not always been good, with little useful dialogue and some dissatisfaction between the council and commercial operator on the quality and reliability of bus services. There had been a 3% decline in bus use up until the authority became a Unitary Authority in 1999, after which it was agreed that the bus network should be reviewed. Between 1999 and 2005 there was a 19% increase in passenger journeys. One of the main reasons for this (they told us) was the development of a much more effective Bus Quality Partnership

with the council bringing positive proposals to the table, with backing from councillors.

202. For example, the bus linking the train station to the bus station was axed by the operator because of congestion at a particularly busy signalised roundabout. People had stopped using the bus as it could not be guaranteed to turn up on time and therefore the route became unviable. The Council suggested and invested in bus priority measures which enabled the buses to access the stations avoiding congestion, which led to a regular, frequent, reliable and profitable route.
203. Councillors and officers must understand, support and work with the commercial operator in order to achieve improvements in services.

Car parking

204. In Cambridgeshire, the county and district councils had agreed an access strategy to encourage bus use and ease congestion. The strategy uses a carrot and stick approach. The carrot includes frequent, reliable, high quality buses on routes with excellent bus priority measures to ensure performance. Part of the 'stick' included reducing on street parking spaces and introducing some of the highest charges in Europe for town centre parking, through mutual agreement with the district council.
205. We consider that an increase in revenue and passenger journeys will only be achievable if, as well as the carrot of new, frequent buses and interchange points with feeder services, more "stick" is introduced to discourage people from using their cars.
- 206. We therefore support the Parking Strategy in the Local Transport Plan 2, which involves joint working between county and district councils, car parking operators and passenger transport operators to co-ordinate charging regimes with the overall transport strategy to promote best use of the local transport network.**

District Councils

207. The two tier authorities visited by the task group demonstrated good relationships between the County and Districts on developing passenger transport services. It is understood that there are no shared BVPIs between county (the Transport Authority) and districts on passenger transport and information on services, although the Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements promise to deliver improved public transport and tackle congestion with more detail provided in the Local Transport Plan 2.
208. The District Councils are essential partners in planning and delivering passenger transport objectives. They will need to be fully on board if the new vision is to be effectively rolled out.

Scrutiny Task Group Activity/Learning

Friday 16 September 2005

Terms of reference, scrutiny proposal agreed

Attendance at Accessibility Workshops and public consultation on LTP2 agreed

Friday 7 October 2005

Pete Browne

- Overview of passenger transport and future development
- Engaging the public

Friday, 4 November 2005

Spoke to Phil Tonks (Bus Users UK) about:

- how to improve relationships between passengers, commercial operators and the council;
- how best to engage/involve the public in dealing with their concerns about passenger transport;
- best practice in other authorities; and
- suggestions for improvement in Worcestershire.

Views of the public

The comments we have received from the public following the press release are summarised as follows:

- Problems caused by suddenly axing services with no advance warning or information – many have complained about missing appointments (most vulnerable suffer the most)
- Lack of shelter whilst waiting
- Difficulties finding route information leaflets and info at bus stops
- Unreliability on some routes
- Lack of cross boundary fare structure
- Rising ticket prices and lack of consistency of fares within districts
- Too many mostly empty buses on some routes and infrequent buses on others
- Lack of driver awareness of fare structures
- Lack of consideration by some drivers/driver training issue
- No matching up of bus and train times (particularly on Sundays in Kidderminster)
- Not enough low floor access buses on some routes.
- poor response to complaints/comments

Michael Howard and Tony Dipple

- Assessing and defining value for money in passenger transport

Friday 11 November 2005 - Accessibility Workshop, Worcester Rugby Club
Views of Young People



VIEWS OF RURAL YOUTH ON PASSENGER TRANSPORT

At the 2nd Accessibility Workshop on 11 November 2005, attended by our Chairman, Liz Tucker and John Campion, representatives from the Rural Youth Transport Forum were asked to provide the Task Group with a brief summary of what they thought currently does not work in rural transport and what would make it better.

The Two Rural Youth Transport Fora met in mid November 2005 and produced the following response:

What Doesn't Work

- Service's aren't available at all in some places
- Need to be more reliable
- May be costly
- Lack of info on existing services e.g. " I wouldn't know how to get on a flexi link
- Timing of buses not always appropriate
- Lack of transport = lack of employment opportunities
- There are not always clear bus timetables
- Buses do not always go to social centers
- Trains do not stop often enough in smaller stations
- Lack of transport = lack of social activities

How To Make it Better

- Consultation – ask us in a young person friendly way what we think

- There has to be more to rural transport than Buses for eg making the bus route easier to get to for example bike racks at bus stops
- Look at other options mopeds, bikes, taxi voucher schemes, car sharing, subsidized driving lesson etc
- Help with first cars and pass plus to lower insurance
- Have a specific person to co ordinate transport schemes in areas
- Look at area, as one transport scheme may not work in each village
- Provide information in the right places and ways - eg blimps hovering over schools, texting services or in school registers
- Provide services in areas that do not have any
- Go to places that people want to go
- Have services young and old proofed

Friday 11 November 2005 - Ed Moore to Street Car demonstration and promotion (photos)



Monday 14 November 2005

Assessing value for money in passenger transport - Workshop
Ownership

Members felt the Council should be more proactive and take ownership of its investment in subsidised services. They asked how the council could exert more influence on the quality and provision of services, for example, over reliability and location of stops on subsidised routes.

- Quality Contracts – (was the Council doing enough?)
- The costs, advantages and disadvantages of the council owning buses
- Information on and reasons for subsidising services (or not as follows:

141 commercial bus service deregistrations in the last 5 years. 29 services were retendered, 21 of which were formally operated by First and the remainder operated by other operators. Of the 21 formerly operated by First, 10 were then

awarded to First with the remaining 11 awarded to other operators. First were successful in winning 2 of the tenders that were previously operated by someone else commercially.

With regard to the 112 services that were not retendered, this was for a variety of reasons including....

- a) A similar service existed
- b) A similar replacement service was operated commercially
- c) Patronage was poor and alternative options were available
- d) Budgetary restrictions and alternative options were available.

Questions and Outcomes – brainstorming for questionnaire to other authorities (see questionnaire)

Monday 14 November 2005 - Visit to Borough of Telford & Wrekin



- The relationship with the commercial service provider
- The effectiveness of the partnership with the commercial service provider, the county and district officers and councillors
- The CC's commercial approach to the relationship with the operator
- Close working between staff from the highway network section and the passenger transport section (including budgeting for bus infrastructure improvements)
- Proactive single information point (Travelink) for all public, social, educational and volunteer transport provision
- Shared taxi provision – successful although problems when funding ends for current scheme and targeted employers and potential employees at job centres
- Car share scheme (council provided set up and software) – targeted employers

- Well marketed clearly identifiable routes (Christmas card info) – well branded – colour coded



Friday 25 November 2005 10.30am –Visit to Cambridgeshire



- Good working partnership with: commercial operator, districts and parish councils
- Dealt with congestion – through rising bollards in city centre, bus priority lanes, park and ride, high parking charges
- Commercially aware approach by county and district councils
- Proactive

- Involvement of Highway Network Manager
- Political support from both county and districts - DCs fully on board
- Transport officers worked with parish councils to ensure good communication and information provision
- Parking policy – high charges to encourage bus use

5 December 2005 – Questionnaire sent to all nearest neighbour authorities

Thursday 15 December 2005

Value for money - subsidised routes

- Countywide review aimed to ensure that a network was established fed by demand responsive transport, which would be more user friendly and affordable.
- The new approach involved a study of travel corridors in the County (previously operators had only done single route studies) they now looked at the level of demand, consulted on the level of frequency required and then would promote the route. This approach required a lot of planning. The principles of travel corridors was the same in rural areas as it was in urban areas.
- One of the difficulties in two tier authorities was that District Councils were responsible for the funding and reimbursement of concessionary fares whereas the County Council was responsible for the provision of non-commercial services and had a duty to increase the number of passengers on passenger transport. The more successful the CC was in increasing passenger numbers, the more expensive the concessionary fare scheme was for DCs. It was suggested. The Task Group might wish to comment that the legislation governing concessionary fares was cumbersome and difficult to implement.
- It would be useful for the scrutiny report to outline what criteria should be used to determine whether a service should be subsidised, bearing in mind the importance of avoiding micro-management of routes. Councillors could also form a view on whether the criteria currently used were appropriate.
- Members of the Task Group needed to form a judgement as to whether improved Government legislation was needed to regulate public transport and whether this might support the governments plans for increasing the number of bus users and the quality of bus services more effectively.
- **Customer Service**
the County Council did not have a statutory responsibility to deal with complaints about commercially operated routes, which made up 80% of the transport services provided;
- the official route for these complaints was via Traveline initially and then directly to the bus operator;
- consider the extent to which the Council should become involved in complaints about commercial operators and whether or not it should encourage commercial operators to deal more effectively with complaints from customers;
- It was planned to introduce clauses into contracts for subsidised routes which

could include the level of service and response to complaints of customers;

- W3 subsidised route bus into Worcester, sailed past without stopping for the Head of Waste and Passenger Transport Management - no-one asked for his details to record the complaint;
- the Task Group would consider making recommendations in its final report about improved levels of customer service in the Passenger Transport Group.

Wednesday 21 December 2005 1.00pm - Visit to Nottinghamshire

- Good relationship with commercial operator and city council
- City Council owned large share of bus company giving them greater power and control
- The County Council owned part of the fleet
- Information on routes was good – a single map for information within and outside the county and a series of clear leaflets covering clearly branded routes and services
- Their Performance Management Framework (PMF) allowed services to be assessed against specific criteria e.g. when considering whether to subsidise a route. This came about as the Cabinet wished to be able to assess supported bus services so that objective decisions could be made when budget pressures occurred; and to evaluate any proposed new services.
- Investment in infrastructure was high
- Smart cards worked well

Monday 9 January 2006 2.00pm - Visit to Warwickshire



- High satisfaction levels due to good information – map and series of leaflets (comparatively low revenue spend)
- Now owned a fleet of about 40 buses – the advantages of this were:
 - tender prices quoted for other home to school transport services were reduced as commercial operators knew they had to compete with the authority

- the council could specify the number of seats and layout of the bus and also got a longer life expectancy from that bus
- revenue spending was reduced
- high cost routes would use own buses
- Built self funding routes



Monday 23 January 2005 pm

Sally Ellison, Community Transport

- Life in community transport was currently overwhelming, those involved were stretched, operating at full capacity- largely due to an increase in NHS work and problems recruiting volunteer drivers
- Principle of volunteering – important for community
- Lack of consistency of provision across the county in terms of fare pricing and range and distance of service area
- Whether WCC or Community Transport are responsible for CRB checks for volunteer drivers was an issue

25 Jan 2005 – Circulation of Report by Pete Browne on the improvements already made to staffing in the Passenger Transport Group to address problems.

- The number of staff allocated to Public Transport as opposed to Education and Social Service transport requirements, were previously insufficient to keep on top of the rapidly changing commercial bus requirements at a time when significant de-registrations were occurring nationally and particularly within the County.
- The Passenger Transport units have been clearly classified into development, operations and fleet management and their teams.
- The area by area review which the Development Unit is currently undertaking will provide a review of services which will form a part of the overall strategy and feed the ongoing work by the Operations team in the improving of contracts and assisting the Council to move towards a more equitable and demand responsive service that benefits both rural and urban areas.

Monday 30 January 2005

Ian Humphries, Managing Director, First in the Midlands

- The relationship between the commercial operator and the County Council was perceived as good, open and frank compared to other authorities.
- Bus priority measures would encourage commercial operators to invest more in new vehicles for transport corridors.
- To ensure the success of park and ride, both county and district councillors (as in beacon authorities), would need to make a political stand and risk unpopularity to drive through bus priority measures.
- If Ian could spend the £3.2m (which the council spend on subsidising routes), he would be more ruthless with unviable services, and spend it on schemes like project express and school yellow buses (£500,000 could buy half a dozen buses which could provide 18 trips to schools if start times were staggered every morning and evening). Would also pump prime demand responsive services and would like to see multi site rural interchanges prosper.
- Driver turnover was stabilising and training was now improving (NVQs for all).
- Providing a reliable and frequent service had taken priority over customer service provision and dealing with complaints - there was a strong desire for improvement in this area (Richard Udall will investigate further the possibility of a third party independent organisation such as Bus Users UK, taking on responsibility for dealing with complaints) and report back asap.
- Commercial operators had faced rising costs (7.5% before the recent increase in fuel) due to increases in, for example wages (to reduce driver turnover), fuel prices and investment in new stock.

- Bus stations were costly to commercial operators and not necessarily where users wanted - if profit margins were tight, it was understandable that operators would want to reduce costs wherever possible. Heated comfortable shelters and bus bays in the right place could be more suitable in some circumstances.
- Concessionary fares was still an issue of concern as the generation factor (calculation to ensure that commercial operators made no more or less as a result of increased passenger numbers) was originally designed for half fare concessions which had allowed some increase in profit for carrying extra passengers. The new scheme expected operators to carry perhaps double the number of passengers for no gain and was perceived as unfair. Members felt that the operators should lobby DfT.

9 February 2006 (2pm) - identify issues, possible areas for recommendation and gaps (see skeleton report – 10 March agenda)

Phil Tonks – proposal (as requested by Task Group) on a 2 yr pilot at an estimated cost of £20,000 approx - Bus Users UK working in Worcestershire to bring their general experience of working with bus users, local operators and local authorities and develop this in a more dynamic, focused way.

Initially by;

- More involvement and understanding of local bus users needs and experiences.
- Close working relationship with local bus operators, county council officers and elected representatives
- Establishment of local network of contacts – this could be individuals or small local groups
- Development of surgeries on a more frequent basis, both in existing centres (such as Worcester, Kidderminster, Redditch) and development of “micro-surgeries” in smaller towns and villages (e.g. Bewdley)
- Establishment and development of “mystery customer” journeys.

16 February 2006 (2pm) - Views of John Smith, Cabinet Member with Responsibility

- Funding for new strategy possible if use the entire £22m passenger transport budget more flexibly.
- The Vision is for anyone, anywhere in the County to able to travel to anywhere else in the County (and its neighbouring areas) within a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost using Passenger Transport, a benefit that the November 2003 Bus and Information Strategy could not deliver.
- Our Vision is that a performance-based system would allow service users to request transport in rural areas within a specified time system, for example within one or two hours of request, or at a specified time slot (e.g. plus or minus 15 minutes on early pre-booking).
- We are strongly in favour of performance management, however the Nottinghamshire system’s complexity and ‘data hunger’ could become an end in itself.

- Essentially we are looking at a minimal number of criteria in the proposed Strategy based on high quality vehicles, driver attitude and behaviour etc:
 1. Length of high frequency networks and population served (a) directly and (b) through feeder services or interchanges
 2. Response time to shared taxi services or number of bookings with the plus or minus 15 minute window
- The strategic issue on monitoring subsidised contracts is not so much the ongoing monitoring but the original business case that suggests intervention is necessary. Without a reasoned and robust business case to monitor against the focus shifts from proper forward planning to the emergency response interventions we have lived with over the recent years of the bus industry's decline outside of London.
- improving information provision - On the KISS principle (Keep It Simple S...) , the simpler the service the simpler the information and the easier it is to communicate. Marketing is a key element in Passenger Transport, and in this context is defined as marketing activity (customer attitude and behavioural research) feeding service design and development, with the consequential awareness, information and promotion of services and products.
- Any form of interface with the travelling public would be welcome. The issue is as ever, prioritising limited resources.

20 Feb 2006 - progress from Bob Robinson on his 2yr project with Adult and Community Care and Childrens Services Transport (Ed/SS transport) circulated to Panel [insert summary]

20 Feb 2006 - PTG's response to log of comments from the public resulting from the task group's initial press release circulated to Panel [insert summary]

3 March 2006 - Views of Alec Kendall (on transport Health issues and Community Transport) circulated to Panel [summary]

Alec Kendall, South Worcestershire Primary Care Trust development manager, advised that with investment, the development of a cadre of paid drivers to reinforce the body of volunteer drivers and the shedding of restrictive licensing conditions and eligibility criteria, the CT sector could take its place in a modernised local network that offers ultimate flexibility of payment, route, mode and time of trips to health and social care. The single mother with a baby to take to and from a clinic in the local market town is as entitled to a community transport opportunity as the elderly patient with mobility problems – both are at risk of exclusion, yet the single mother is unlikely to access the CT service under present conditions.

He made the point that the practice among some schemes of working within district boundaries is not keeping pace with the needs of passengers. For these reasons, it may be difficult to market Community Transport to new passengers in new settings with new needs.

10 March 2006 (2pm) - Meeting to consider initial skeleton draft report and recommendations

22 March 2006 (2pm) - Meeting to consider outline report and recommendations

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S PASSENGER TRANSPORT LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Nottinghamshire were proud of their local performance measures which were introduced in 2004. Information was collated in a system called PRIDE. This stood for Perform - Review - Improve - Deliver = Excellence. PRIDE was available to all staff through the Intranet. There were clear lines of responsibility and ownership for the indicators by specified staff.

INDICATOR		WHO MEASURING	FREQUENCY
BV102	Passenger Journeys on Buses	Robin Riley	Annual
BV103	Percentage of users satisfied with local provision of passenger transport information	Robin Riley	3 yearly (2006/2007)
BV104	Percentage of users satisfied with local bus service.	Robin Riley	3 yearly (2006/2007)
PT01	Percentage of population within a 10 minute walk of an hourly or better bus service: a) Rural population b) Urban population.	Kate Robinson	Quarterly
PT02	Non-commercial local bus service social performance score (using bus service performance management framework – PMF)	Kate Robinson	Quarterly
PT03	Proportion of bus contracts that received less than 3 tenders split by school and local services	PO Procurement	Annual
PT04	Percentage of inspected tendered bus services issued with: - Immediate prohibitions - Advisory - Pass	David Dance/VOSA	Monthly
PT05	Cost of subsidy for tendered local bus services, per passenger	Andy Buckland	Annual
PT07	Percentage of bus stops on county highways with raised kerbs.	Mike Bexson	Bi-annual
PT08	Percentage of bus stops with flag and timetable case	Mike Bexson	Bi-annual
PT09	Percentage of NCC bus stops with new or newly replaced shelter	Mike Bexson	Bi-annual
PT10	Percentage of NCC bus shelters with solar powered lighting	Mike Bexson	Bi-annual
PT11	Percentage of eligible population who have concessionary bus pass (by district and gender).	Dave Bennett	Annual (calendar year)
PT12	Average turnaround of school travel applications - Pre and Post 16	PO Procurement	Bi-annual

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S PASSENGER TRANSPORT
LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - continued...**

INDICATOR		WHO MEASURING	FREQUENCY	
PT13	Cost of administration as a proportion of total budget/support costs for: Concessionary fares; Contracted local bus services; Infrastructure; Community Transport; School Transport; Information and Publicity	Robin Riley	Bi-annual	
PT14	NCC support to community transport schemes - Number of schemes supported - Number of volunteers - Number of NCC trained drivers - Funding provided by NCC	Cristina Nogues	Annual	
PT15	Effectiveness of NCC supported community transport schemes: - Number of users (car schemes) - Number of trips (car schemes) - Km travelled (minibus schemes)	Cristina Nogues	Quarterly	
PT16	Average vehicle loading %, as a measure of overall efficiency in pupil / vehicle allocations	Cristina Nogues	Quarterly	* NEW *
PT17	Customer satisfaction: percentage of users satisfied with (a) local provision of passenger transport information b) local bus service	Cristina Nogues	Quarterly	* NEW *
PT18	Cost of administration per 1000 population a) Infrastructure b) Information and publicity	Cristina Nogues	Quarterly	* NEW *

Appendix 3

Responses by Passenger Transport Group (PTG) to the public's comments after the scrutiny task group's press release

Name no.	Brief Call Details	Action Taken	PTG Response / Further Action
1	School bus failed to pick up on 08/09/05 pm	AP emailed on 05/10/05	Bus Company contacted, who assured us that there was a bus at the school at this time. With this in mind, this has since been monitored for compliance with no issues of note.
2	Big increase in fare on 303. #3 runs often but few passengers. Wyre forest over 60's pass doesn't cover Worcester	MK replied by letter on 10/10/05	Simpler flat fare structure implemented by First, which has resulted in an easier to understand system. Some people benefited from the new fares and some unfortunately were disadvantaged. #3 service has been reduced on a commercial basis, but we try and work with operators, especially First in order to try and maintain a stable network. WCC are actively working with District councils to implement a County wide pass. (Update to this: This has now been successfully negotiated for April 1st launch)
3	No info on axed service. Over 65's – some pay, some don't, Why? Drivers unaware of their fares	AM called Mrs Firth on 10/10/05	WCC try to publicise as widely as possible any changes, in addition to the work carried out by Commercial Operators. Obviously this did not work as well as hoped for on this occasion. Timetable changes are now limited to 3 main key dates per year for the purposes of service stability. Please see notes above on Concessionary Fares.
4	Stourport – Kidderminster train station service is not in time with the trains.	AM called and discussed points raised.	Explained difficulties of trying to meet the need of all passengers but listened to his views. Agreed to look at general timing of the buses at the next review, and will look at the timing of the first journey in the meantime.
5	Most First services no longer start from bus station in Kidderminster, bus shelters no good in town	AM telephoned to discuss further – no reply on 3 occasions. Will send written reply.	Commercial decision by the operator First to cease using the Bus station. Ongoing discussions taking place about the future of the Bus Station. Bus shelter provision raised with WFDC through WFBQP

Name no.	Brief Call Details	Action Taken	PTG Response / Further Action
6	Wyre Forest - Lack of change of service information, buses not reliable, Who makes decisions on frequency on #3	No response required	WCC try to publicise as widely as possible any changes, in addition to the work carried out by Commercial Operators. Obviously this did not work as well as hoped for on this occasion. Timetable changes are now limited to 3 main key dates per year for the purposes of service stability. The majority of frequencies are commercially based, but will note for the future. Will raise the issue of driver awareness with operating companies.
7	Not enough buses on 178 service	No response required	Frequency in line with the WCC Bus & Information Strategy adopted by Cabinet in 2003. This document is now under review.
8	No bus shelter in Kidderminster town	No response required	Commercial decision by the operator First to cease using the Bus station. Ongoing discussions taking place about the future of the Bus Station. Bus shelter provision raised with WFDC through WFBQP.
9	Poor service reliability on 11 & 12	AM spoke and explained action taken with Choice, and promise of improved services in due course.	Choice Managing Director called in to discuss the issues. He will take personal responsibility for the improved performance and a new local manager installed. Will be monitored closely and follow up meetings to be planned. (Next one planned for early new year) Encouraged to report any further issues directly to AM, who is liaising with Choice.
10	Would like 61a reinstated, Subsidised service should be offered after 1.30pm on #64	No response required	Improved pm service will be introduced on 64 in Feb 06. A Timetable will be sent to Mrs Smith in due course.
11	#2 – Bus stop half a mile from shops	AM called to cascade action proposed	Bus rerouted from 28.11.06
12	Concerned about quality of bus provision in Wyre Forest	AM called back	Invited to Bus user surgery in Kidderminster 20.11.05

Name no.	Brief Call Details	Action Taken	PTG Response / Further Action
13	#125 late, missed appointment. Lack of services in Bridgenorth	AM telephoned	Would raise service gap with Shropshire CC. Advised of service 751 and sent timetables.
14	Lack of frequency on #125	No response required	See above
15	Axed 292 service, could this be reinstated	AM e-mailed response	Explained reasons for split of services. Advised that the service will be reviewed at the end of the contract.
16	First Drivers uncooperative, timekeeping poor, Fleet needs updating	AM e-mailed response	Comments noted and passed on to the companies mentioned. Driver attitudes are a concern to us and we are currently looking at ways to address this key area.
17	Lack of timetable info in Kidderminster for non 'First' buses, Flexillink under utilised and promoted, Scruffy shelters.	No response required	Comments noted. First tend to only promote their services. Timetable information around Kidderminster is being reviewed and improved. Earlier comments re bus shelters and WFDC apply.
18	Lack of Transport in Finstall and Aston Fields	e-mailed highlighting available services	Will bear suggestions in mind when the area is reviewed. Explained existing travel options.
19	Lack of Frequency of service 8	e-mailed explaining commercial services and current strategy	On subsidised services, the frequency is in line with the WCC Bus & Information Strategy adopted by Cabinet in 2003. This document is now under review. The Operator dictates frequencies on Commercial services. Comments noted however and will be taken into consideration when the area is reviewed.
20	Axed bus routes, moved shelters.	Telephoned several times. No reply. Left messages on the answering machine.	The commercial service in question has now been re-routed following public pressure. Commercial decision by the operator First to cease using the Bus station. Ongoing discussions taking place about the future of the Bus Station.
21	Lack of Frequency of services in Winyates	No response required	Comments noted. Previous comments re driver attitudes apply. Newly appointed Marketing Manager to oversee the complete revamp of Marketing and Publicity.

Name no.	Brief Call Details	Action Taken	PTG Response / Further Action
22	Flexilink timetable needs more publicity	No response required	Comments noted. Previous comments re driver attitudes apply. Newly appointed Marketing Manager to oversee the complete revamp of Marketing and Publicity.
23	Lack of timetable information in Hallow	Thanked for comments	Comment noted. Promised to review publicity in the area.
24	Lack of bus shelters in Wilton Ave. Altered No 8 route	No response required	Comment noted about the bus shelters and will pass on to WFDC. The No.8 service was altered by First on both commercial and passenger number grounds.
25	Operators services booklet required.	No response required	Comment noted and forwarded to marketing team regarding the booklet. The issue surrounding the acceptance of operators accepting competitor's tickets is ongoing. Subsidised services accept all ticket types/origins, but as yet we cannot force commercially operated services to do the same. This is something we need to work towards.
26	Service between, Kidderminster and Hartlebury at 15.25pm is frequently late.	Telephone and left message	Promised to monitor pm journey. Have raised the issues with the operator who has promised to look into this.
27	Altered bus times with no advance warning	Telephoned	Agreed to consider retiming to 2300 at next review. Advised of 2325 DRM service on Fri and Sat. We currently only (with the rare exception) have little influence on commercial services, but do take customers needs into consideration on subsidised services.
28	Would like a service between Droitwich and Worcs hospital, Late and axed buses	Replied by e-mail	Explained about NHS funding for the Kidderminster and Redditch links, and commercial service and options for changing in Worcester. Would monitor the commercial 144 service, and asked for specific times and dates. The stop at the WRH Children's Ward has since been re-introduced after pressure from both the public and WCC. The 22 service was axed by First for commercial reasons, and WCC stepped in to provide a partial replacement service.

A summary of the case for funding BUUK by the Welsh Assembly is attached at the end of this proposal.



Proposals and Suggestions for Bus Users UK Involvement in Worcestershire

**** Please note that the recommendation for a 6-9 month pilot is only partly based on this proposal***

Introduction

Bus Users UK is an independent organisation, formed in 1985 (as the National Federation of Bus Users). In the absence of an official statutory body for users of buses, BUUK aims to provide a link between the users and providers of bus services.

We campaign for better bus services, work closely with operators, Local Authorities and other agencies and organisations to help passengers understand the often complex arrangements regarding the operation and delivery of bus services.

We hold Bus Users Surgeries across the UK, providing an independent platform for passengers to meet with senior management of bus companies and local authorities to discuss their concerns and issues on a one-to-one basis, with the promise of a written reply, if required.

As well as helping bus users to understand where best to direct their comments and complaints to, BUUK is a partner in the Bus Appeals Body. This is an independent, non-statutory body that consists of BUUK, a representative from the bus industry and an independent Chair that reviews and recommends action on unresolved complaints.

BUUK's membership is comprised mainly of bus passengers, although our work has been recognised by the industry such that we have representation in most major bus companies and local authorities.

We have separate operations in Wales (funded by the Welsh assembly Government) and Scotland (funded by the Scottish Executive).

BUUK Working in Worcestershire

Although a national organisation, BUUK has only 2 full-time national officers for England. We often rely on local contacts and members to keep us up to date with local issues.

Working in Worcestershire with a more focused objective would be a pilot for BUUK. We would wish to bring our general experience of working with bus users,

local operators and local authorities and develop this in a more dynamic, focused way.

Initially, we would see the proposal developing thus;

- More involvement and understanding of local bus users needs and experiences.
- Close working relationship with local bus operators, county council officers and elected representatives
- Establishment of local network of contacts – this could be individuals or small local groups
- Development of surgeries on a more frequent basis, both in existing centres (such as Worcester, Kidderminster, Redditch) and development of “micro-surgeries” in smaller towns and villages (e.g. Bewdley)
- Establishment and development of “mystery customer” journeys

More involvement and understanding of local bus users needs and experiences.

Initially, we would seek to gain a clearer picture of local bus users current experiences and aspirations. This could be achieved in a variety of ways, both on and off bus. “Traditional” types of survey could be undertaken, but it may be better to try asking people “with a blank piece of paper”. We find this approach at surgeries works effectively, as people are free to voice their concerns as to what they really feel, rather than try to accommodate a “tick box” system.

We would also advertise in the local media for both general comments from the travelling public (to be gained through post, phone, fax and email / text) and for individuals and small groups of travellers to become regular contacts to feed back their thoughts and experiences.

Through this, we could create a “wish list” of small, medium and long-term aims. These could be discussed with operators and the local authority to see which, if any, could be practically achievable. Continued close contact with our list of local users could explain how and why some suggestions could or could not be achieved, with the result being a greater understanding between users and providers of bus services.

We would also seek to produce leaflets that ask for suggestions and comments from the travelling public. These would be distributed widely (and possibly be freepost, if budget allows) and the feedback continuously shared between operators and the local authority.

Close working relationship with local bus operators, county council officers and elected representatives

Bus Users UK has a close, professional working relationship with the bus industry. Our aim is to help the travelling public understand how decisions regarding the provision of their bus service are taken. For any project as is being suggested to be effective, we need the support and co-operation of both the local bus operators and Local County and district officers and councillors. This has the potential to be beneficial to all parties as there is often misunderstandings and misinterpretations of procedures and events between the various parties involved in the provision of local bus services.

Bus Users UK is a non-political organisation. Therefore, we would not seek to directly become involved in internal politics regarding transport policy. Our only aim is to see a fair deal for the bus travelling public.

Our independence from both the industry and elected representatives is often viewed as a positive existence by bus users.

Establishment of local network of contacts – this could be individuals or small local groups

Although “public meetings” have their importance, we have often found that such events don’t always provide the true voice of local bus users. Quite often, such a meeting could be dominated by an individual, or, conversely, someone may be too shy or embarrassed to stand up in front of a lot of people to have their say. A more informal network of local individuals, feeding in their experiences and suggestions on a regular basis, and backed up with local, informal meetings of small numbers, may encourage local bus users to become more involved, especially if they feel their points are being listened to and acted upon.

We would seek to establish such a network, with their expenses paid for their input (i.e. travel expenses for occasional meetings, pre-paid envelopes for sending information, etc)

We would not preclude the inclusion of local groups of people, but we would prefer to see numbers kept to a limit that is comfortable and effective.

Development of surgeries on a more frequent basis

BUUK has held surgeries in Worcestershire before, in partnership with the local authority and the major bus operator (First). These have been in Worcester, Redditch and Kidderminster.

Inevitably, given our nationwide programme, these events are held only occasionally although we would like to hold more.

As part of a greater focus on Worcestershire, we would envisage a much greater focus on the surgery programme, with much more regular events in the main towns in the county. We would also trial a smaller “micro” version of a surgery in smaller population centres. Another trial could envisage holding a surgery at different times of the day, such as commuting times, although it is acknowledged that this approach may not be so successful at peak times.

Establishment and development of “mystery customer” journeys

As part of understanding the journey experience of local bus users, we would propose an ongoing “mystery customer” scheme. The major operator (First) may already have such a scheme in place. Our aim would be to work with the operators and share our findings to help them tackle any problems that may become evident. Provision of this service may be re-charged to the operator as a service if desired. In any event, such a scheme, whether supported financially by the operators or not, would provide useful feedback. This scheme could be rolled out amongst the individual network of contacts to participate as required (with expenses paid).

Other Activities / Input

We would seek to work closely with other public transport initiatives in the county, such as input into the ongoing “TravelWise” scheme, assisting county council officers where appropriate. We would also seek ongoing dialogue with other organisations in the community such as older people’s forums and other operators and representatives of other modes of public transport (e.g. rail).

Progressing the Scheme

Bus Users UK would wish to see the scheme run as a trial for at least 12 months – 2 years. This would provide enough time to assess the longer-term viability of the scheme.

We would wish to provide evidence at the end of the trial period regarding statistics relating to numbers of issues raised, numbers resolved, etc.

We would also seek further information as to whether the scheme would be based in county council accommodation.

Clarification is also required as to whether the proposal is based on a full or part time position.

A full service level agreement would need to be established.

Based on a full-time position, BUUK estimates that a cost of £20,000 would be an approximate figure (subject to further discussion and agreement), pro-rata for a part-time position.

For further information, please contact PHIL TONKS, Assistant Officer (England), Bus Users UK on:

01384 273267 (office)
07860 721554 (mobile)
01384 273267 (fax)

phil@bususers.org (email)

www.bususers.org (website)

Summary of the National Federation of Bus Users (now Bus Users UK) case for support and funding in Wales, Nov 2003.

History

The National Federation of Bus Users was established about 17 years ago to give the bus user a voice after de-regulation.

What it does

- Facilitates Bus User 'surgeries' with local bus operators and transport officers from local councils to help deal with complaints
- mediates in cases of unresolved complaints through the establishment of the Bus Appeals Body
- Represents users on strategic and consultative bodies/groups, eg Regional Transport Boards, Quality Bus Working Group.
- Develops and maintains relationships with Traffic Commissioner and Unitary authorities

Background

In 2001/02, rail passengers in Wales made 18million passenger journeys compared to104million bus passenger journeys.

A statutory, professional and effective, Rail Passengers Committee (RPC) representing rail users, was funded by central government (£284,000 in 2002) and handled over 600 complaints in 2002/03. This compared to an average of 150 bus users complaints handled by the NFBU, suggesting serious under representation.

NFBU argued that more funding was needed to raise their profile as:

- many more complaints would be generated if people were more easily able to carry out the process, therefore more clerical support was needed;
- complaints handling and monitoring were crucial components in a process of continuous improvement;
- a more efficient structure for bus users was required; and
- bus users and non users should be helped to better understand the structure, constraints and abilities of the bus industry.

Grant aid of £69,000 per annum for 04/05 (which included an additional £6,000 for one off set up costs) and £63,000 for 05/06, was therefore provided by the Welsh Assembly for the following purposes:

- **to increase existing officer time for Wales from 1.5 to 3 days per wk**
- **to appoint a deputy officer for Wales to implement objectives set out below**
- **to appoint 6 local representatives to monitor local media and some service monitoring**
- **to cover associated office rental, stationery and telephone costs, and**
- **to cover non recurrent publicity and office equipment costs.**

Bus Users UK Officer Objectives:

1. To gather and reflect the views of bus passengers in Wales
2. To provide a contact for all the complaints in Wales whether or not they fall within the remit of the Bus Appeals body.
3. To develop and maintain a database of bus passenger complaints in Wales.
4. To organise and manage the delivery of bus passenger surgeries in Wales.
5. To provide an advice service to local authorities and bus operators in Wales to improve responses to passenger views and to improve service delivery.
6. To provide advice as required to the National Assembly for Wales and Ministers of the Welsh Assembly Government, both directly and through the Welsh Transport Forum, on strategic and technical developments related to bus transport.

Appendix 5

SUBSIDY LIST INCLUDING SUBSIDY PER PASSENGER

LOCAL BUS SERVICES BUDGET 2005-06

The Contract Cost to Council is a forecast for this financial year. The final amount will vary according to the revenue taken on-bus.

Contract Number	Contract Name	Operator Code	Cost Code	Contract Type	De Minimis / Emergency	Subsidy per Passenger
4597	Worcester North Park and Ride	MR	V21000	Cost		0.69
4613	Birmingham - Worcester - Malverns (Sundays 1)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4614	Birmingham - Worcester - Malverns (Sundays 2)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4620	Childswickham Diversion	CA	V21020	Subsidy	D	
4636	Pershore - Eckington - Worcester (add daytime)	AS	V21020	Subsidy	D	
4637	Pershore - Eckington - Worcester (add eve)	AS	V21020	Subsidy	D	
4638	Pershore - Eckington - Worcester (Sunday early)	AS	V21020	Subsidy	D	
4639	Pershore - Eckington - Worcester (Sunday late)	AS	V21020	Subsidy	D	
4834	Evesham - Worcester (evenings)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4835	Worcester - Evesham (evenings)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4838	Fernhill Heath - Bishop Perowne School	AS	V21020	Cost		3.07
4842	Worcester City early (M-F am) 1	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4843	Worcester City early (M-F am) 2	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4844	Worcester City early (Sat am) 1	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4845	Worcester City early (Sat am) 2	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4846	Worcester City early (Sat am) 3	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4848	Worcester City early (Sat am) 5	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4849	Worcester City early (Sat am) 6	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4851	Worcester City early (M-F am) 3	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4887	Haberley - Wolverley High School	WH	V21020	Subsidy		
4888	Franche - Wolverley High School	WH	V21020	Subsidy		
4889	Blakebrook/Puxton - Wolverley High School	WH	V21020	Subsidy		
4890	Franche Area - Wolverley High School	WH	V21020	Subsidy		
4896	Worcester - Clifton-on-Teme - Rushwick	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4897	Worcester - Bromsgrove (early am)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4933	Leigh & Bransford School & Knightwick - Malvern	BD	V21020	Cost		40.33
4934	Worcester - Malvern (Sat am)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4940	Worcester - Stratford (Sunday)	WO	V21020	Cost		2.34
4954	Malvern Town Services	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4963	Marlbrook - Alexandra Hospital (Early Mon to Fris)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4964	Redditch - Birmingham (Early Mons to Sats)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4975	Redditch Schools 1	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4976	Redditch Schools 2	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
4977	Redditch Schools 3	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5132	Redditch - Worcester (shoppers)	DU	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5134	Worcester - Redditch (New End - Redd extn)	DU	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5135	Worcester - Redditch (Inkberrow - Redd extn)	DU	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5137	Redditch - Worcester (Mon - Sat)	HC	V21020	Cost		3.50
5142	Kington - Worcester (Tuesday)	DU	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5189	Hagley - Kidderminster Schools	WO	V21020	Cost		1.98
5196	Franche - Sion Hill MS	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5197	Land Oak - Comberton Schools	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5198	Blakedown / Caunsall - Kidderminster Schools	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5205	Menithwood / Knighton - Tenbury Wells (Tuesday)	HO	V21020	Subsidy		

Ceased

Ceased

5206	Highwood/Offmore Farm - Kidderminster (Thurs/Sat)	YA	V21020	Subsidy			
5207	Astley Burf - Stourport (Fridays)	CN	V21020	Subsidy			
5208	Kidderminster - Hagley (Circular)	WH	V21020	Subsidy			
5209	Kidderminster - Kinver (Tues / Thurs / Sat)	WH	V21020	Subsidy			
5213	Marlbrook - Redditch (Early Saturday)	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5217	Redditch Schools 4	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5221	Bromsgrove - Stourbridge	HN	V21020	Cost			1.81
5224	Worcester - Crowle - Droitwich / Feckenham	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5226	Kidderminster - Ludlow	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5229	Far Forest - Kidderminster (early Sat)	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5356	Holberron Green - Redditch (Thurs)	HC	V21020	Cost	D		3.74
5357	Worcester - Birmingham (Mon - Thurs eve)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5362	Worcester - Clifton-on-Teme (M-F)	BD	V21020	Cost			2.48
5363	Hallow - Worcester (M-F am)	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5364	Worcester - Martley/Clifton (Sat pm)	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5385	Hampton - St. Egwin's School	CW	V21020	Cost	D		0.52
5389	Evesham - Long Lartin	CW	V21020	Cost	D		0.98
5390	Worcester - Malvern (early M-F)	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5412	Worcester Warndon <i>flexiLINK</i>	AC	V21020	Cost			6.85
5418	Chaddesley Corbett / Stone - Wolverley HS	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5419	Portway - Birmingham (eve)	MD	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5431	Droitwich Schools	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5433	Redditch - Inkberrow - Worcester <i>flexiLINK</i>	RAT	V21020	Cost			
5438	Evesham - Pebworth - Stratford <i>flexiLINK</i>	MR	V21020	Cost			5.84
5439	Redditch - Matchborough West (Mon - Fri)	WH	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5440	Redditch - Matchborough East (daytime)	MR	V21020	Subsidy			
5441	Redditch - Wythall - Birmingham	JH	V21020	Cost			1.10
5442	Worcester - Warndon Villages via Merrimans Hill	LT	V21020	Cost	D		0.82
5445	Redditch - Wythall - Solihull	HC	V21020	Subsidy			
5446	Kings Heath - Redditch (Early am, M-F)	HC	V21020	Subsidy			
5447	Bromsgrove - Cotteridge / Birmingham	ZK	V21020	Cost			2.84
5449	Evesham - Honeybourne	MR	V21020	Cost	D		0.92
5455	Ledbury - Malvern (Evenings)	DM	V21020	Subsidy			
5458	Evesham - Stratford late pm peak	SD	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5536	Kidder - Bewdley - Stourport (Circl)	MR	V21020	Cost	E		0.96
5537	Lickey End - Catshill Middle Sch	MR	V21020	Cost	E		4.44
5538	Bromsgrove Locals 1	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5546	Inkford - Birmingham (off-peak)	MD	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5548	Droitwich - Stoke Prior - Redditch	WH	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5549	Evesham - Pershore - Worcester	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5550	Evesham - Worcester (pm)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5551	Elmley Castle - Pershore - Worcester	MR	V21020	Cost	D		7.67
5553	Worcester - Tenbury Wells 1	YA	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5554	Worcester - Tenbury Wells 2	YA	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5555	Worcester - Tenbury Wells 3	YA	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5557	Tenbury Wells Area Shopping Services	YA	V21020	Cost			6.86
5558	Pershore - Stratford (2nd Th)	DU	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5559	Cleobury Mortimer - Worcester (Shoppers)	WH	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5565	Fairfield - Bromsgrove via Dodford	ML	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5569	Redditch Daytime Locals	HC	V21020	Subsidy	D		
5574	Worcester - Upton - Malvern <i>easyLINK</i>	MR	V21020	Cost			1.24
5575	Malvern School Bus	MT	V21020	Cost			0.48
5576	Malvern Works / Rural Shuttle	MR	V21020	Cost			9.70
5579	Evesham - Tewkesbury - Cheltenham	MR	V21020	Cost			1.53
5582	Worcester - Blackpole (Evenings)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D		

Ceased
Ceased

Ceased

Ceased
Ceased

5584	Worcester - Malvern (Evenings)	AS	V21020	Cost		2.63
5585	Worcester - Upton (Evenings)	AS	V21020	Cost		2.50
5586	Worcester - Tewkesbury (Sundays)	AS	V21020	Cost		9.44
5622	Droitwich Locals & Tibberton - High School	MH	V21020	Cost		1.12
5623	Droitwich - Bromsgrove via The Stokes	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5624	Bromsgrove - Alvechurch - Redditch	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5628	Evesham - Redditch - Birmingham (Evenings)	PT	V21020	Subsidy		
5629	Redditch - Bromsgrove Area (Evenings)	PT	V21020	Subsidy		
5630	Evesham - Redditch - Birmingham (Sundays)	PT	V21020	Cost		2.86
5631	Redditch - Bromsgrove Area (Sundays)	PT	V21020	Subsidy		
5632	Redditch - Crabbs Cross (Sundays)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5636	Stourport <i>flexiLINK</i> / Stourport - Worcester	MR	V21020	Cost		2.03
5637	Kidderminster - Stourport - Worcester (Sat Evngs)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5638	Kidderminster - Halesowen / Birmingham (M-S)	DB	V21020	Subsidy		
5639	Hospital Link Services	MR	V21020	Cost		1.03
5640	Birmingham - Kidderminster - Ludlow	WH	V21020	Cost		4.64
5641	Acton Green / Battenhall - Worcester	BD	V21020	Cost		2.73
5645	St. Egwin's - Hampton	CW	V21020	Subsidy		
5649	Burlish First School	CN	V21020	Cost	D	
5650	Worcester Sundays	MR	V21020	Cost		1.06
5651	Redditch Schools 5	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5652	Bromsgrove - Rubery - Halesowen	LU	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5653	Droitwich - Redditch	WH	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5654	Droitwich - Hanbury/Stourport	WH	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5656	Malvern - Gloucester / Cheltenham (Sat)	AS	V21020	Cost		5.00
5657	Upton - Worcester	AS	V21020	Cost		8.54
5659	Broadway - Evesham	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5660	Chipping Campden - Evesham (M-F)	CW	V21020	Cost		1.71
5661	Chipping Campden - Evesham (Sat)	HS	V21020	Cost		2.78
5662	Tenbury - Broombank	HO	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5663	Kidderminster Local Services (M-F Peaks)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5664	Kidderminster - Ferndale/Franche (Early Sat)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5665	Bromsgrove - Charford	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5666	Tenbury - Kidderminster	RB	V21020	Subsidy		
5667	Worcester - Malvern / Birmingham (New Year)	DB	V21020	Cost	E	
5668	Malvern - Hanley Castle High School	MT	V21020	Cost		1.46
5669	Wyche Cutting - Chase High School	MT	V21020	Cost		1.29
5670	Chase High Sch - Wyche Cutting	MT	V21020	Cost		8.66
5735	Stourport - Kidderminster Rly Stations	WH	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5736	Willersey - Evesham (am)	CA	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5737	Willersey - Evesham (pm)	CA	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5738	Childswickham Diversion	CA	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5739	Evesham Town & Schools Services	CW	V21020	Cost	D	1.37
5740	Evesham - Long Lartin	CW	V21020	Cost	D	0.77
5741	Eckington - Evesham (Fridays)	CW	V21020	Cost	D	5.26
5742	Bredon Hill Middle School and Pershore Shoppers	CW	V21020	Cost	D	5.88
5743	Upton Snodsbury/Peopleton - Tewkesbury (Wed)	CW	V21020	Cost	D	3.17
5744	The Lenches - Evesham (shoppers)	CW	V21020	Cost	D	1.70
5745	Pershore PlumLine	DU	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5746	Pershore/Tewkesbury - Eckington - Worcester	AS	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5747	Norton/Elmley Castle - Tewkesbury	AS	V21020	Cost	D	12.79
5748	Evesham - Pershore - Worcester (Evenings)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5749	Pershore PlumLine	LT	V21020	Cost		1.59
5750	Evesham Town	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5751	Worcester - Malvern (Sundays)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D	

Ceased
Ceased

5752	Worcester - Birmingham (Sundays)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5753	Kidder - Bewdley - Stourport (Circl)	CT	V21020	Cost		0.75
5754	Lickey End - Catshill Middle Sch	CY	V21020	Cost		1.97
5755	Kidderminster - Stourport (Evenings)	CT	V21020	Cost		7.34
5756	Kidderminster - Bewdley (Evenings)	CT	V21020	Cost		6.06
5757	Evesham - Long Lartin	HS	V21020	Cost		3.02
5758	Pershore - Eckington - Worcester	AS	V21020	Subsidy		
5759	Redditch Taxibus Services (Evenings)	TC	V21020	Cost		7.87
5760	Tenbury - Kidderminster (off-peak)	RB	V21020	Cost	D	1.86
5761	Malvern Town Services (1)	MR	V21020	Subsidy		
5762	Rye Cross - Sledge Green - Tewkesbury	MR	V21020	Cost		
5763	Ombersley Road - Bishop Perowne CE High School	AS	V21020	Cost		2.30
5764	Worcester - Upton - Malvern <i>easyLINK</i>	AS	V21020	Cost		1.32
5765	Worcester - Holt Heath - Stourport (M-F am)	YA	V21020	Subsidy	D	
5766	Henwick Park - Worcester - WRH	MR	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5767	Worcester - Blackpole (M-S Evenings)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5768	Droitwich - Westlands Estate	MH	V21020	Cost		0.91
5769	Droitwich - Claines - Worcester	AS	V21020	Cost		3.61
5770	Kidderminster - Stourport (M-F Early am)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5771	Bewdley - Kidderminster (M-F Early am)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5772	Kidderminster - Franche (M-F am peak)	MR	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5774	Redditch - Bromsgrove (M-F am peak)	HC	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5777	Worcester - Perdiswell - WRH - Worcester	MR	V21020	Cost	E	
5778	Kidderminster - Greenhill - Sion Hill & Schools	CT	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5779	Land Oak - Comberton & Offmore Schools	CT	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5780	Stone / Spennells - Sion Hill & Wolverley Schools	WO	V21020	Cost	E	
5782	Kidderminster Estates Combination	CT	V21020	Subsidy	E	
5857	Kidderminster - Habberley / Fairfield (am)	CT	V21020	Subsidy	E	

Information about a sample of bus services

Dropped routes (not replaced)

a) Service 29 / 29A / 29B / 30 / 30A / 30B

WORCESTER – RED HILL – PERRY WOOD – RONKSWOOD - WORCESTER

From 2 April 2001 a service was provided during the daytime on a commercial basis between Worcester, Red Hill and Perry Wood on a half-hourly basis by First. There was an hourly subsidised service during the evening and all day on Sundays operated by First between Worcester, Red Hill, Perry Wood, Ronkswood and Worcester.

From 6 January 2003 an hourly partly subsidised service was provided between Worcester, Ronkswood, Perry Wood and Red Hill that carried 12 passengers per day on the subsidised journeys. The evening and Sunday services continued until 17 April 2004.

On the 17 April 2004 all services through Perry Wood were withdrawn.

From 12 June 2005 the Warndon flexiLINK service was rerouted through the area to provide a service to the Worcestershire Royal Hospital on a half-hourly basis on a Monday to Friday that was reduced to hourly from the 5 September 2005. It is possible to change at the hospital onto a frequent service to Worcester City Centre. Through fares are not available.

First still provide commercial services to Red Hill and Ronkswood during the daytime and under subsidy to Ronkswood in the evening and on Sundays. But the section of route between Red Hill, Perry Wood and Ronkswood is still un-served with a direct bus to the City Centre.

b) Service 2

BEWDLEY – CROSSLEY RETAIL PARK – KIDDERMINSTER - SPENNELLS

The daytime service 2 is provided commercially by First, with no subsidy from the County Council.

The diversion of the service via Crossley Retail Park, which is located just off the St. Mary's Ringway, was funded by the developers of the site for an initial period of five years. Numbers using the diversion were small whilst the five-minute diversion caused inconvenience to through passengers. Following the withdrawal of the developers funding in September 2005, the diversion was withdrawn. Poor usage of the service did not justify funding from the County Council.

The actual usage of Crossley Park stops based on one full day's survey was a total of 25:

Eastbound - from Bewdley to Spennells:

10 off 3 on

Westbound - from Spennells to Bewdley:
5 off 7 on

For comparative purposes, during the day 765 passengers were recorded using all the town centre stops between Crossley Park and Comberton Hill.

Usage of Crossley park stops represents 3.26% of Kidderminster town area stop usage. More economic ways of serving Crossley Park are being investigated.

Perceived to be failing routes

c) Service 363

**WORCESTER – CALLOW END – UPTON UPON SEVERN – WELLAND –
GREAT MALVERN**

Members suggested this Astons Malvern to ~~Kempsey~~ Worcester via Upton route.

Since September 2005 when Astons Coaches took over the service there have been various perceived problems.

Morning journey delayed – traffic congestion appears to be worse than previous years. From December 2005 journey is retimed earlier to achieve a punctual arrival in Worcester.

Morning journey overloaded – passenger numbers have increased by 17%. When contract was written we asked for 2 large buses, no tender was received to that effect. We had to accept a tender for only a 26 seater (as per First) and that has not proved adequate

Unsuitable bus being used – County Council owned vehicle was transferred from First to Astons when contract changed. The condition of the vehicle was considered unacceptable and had to be returned to First for rectification work. This led to a non low-floor, no standing bus, being used frequently.

Tickets being issued slowly – due to morning journey being overloaded a coach is now being used from 1 November. This was not able to have a ticket machine fixed on to it so tickets were issued by hand. An electronic hand held machine is now being used.

Drivers not knowing route – lack of driver training, now a small pool of drivers appears to be working OK.

Route changes – when First were operating the service there were concerns about using Church Street westbound (uphill) route was amended to avoid this section of road.

Fare increases – when contract was changed a new faretable was introduced, this increased certain return fares and lowered all single fares. Took a while for passengers to realise differences. From December more season tickets are being introduced to cover all contracted services in the South Malvern Hills area.

Afternoon journey delayed – frequent complaints that the 1653 journey from Worcester does not leave until 1710. This is caused by high loadings on the previous journey that conveys children home from Dyson Perrins High School and The Chase High School. The numbers being carried were more than those carried by First. After looking at information previously supplied from First it appears that this journey was frequently late, but no direct complaints were ever received. Both late afternoon journeys are being retimed later to allow punctual timekeeping.

Integrated ticketing – First issued season tickets valid over their whole network. Aston's can only issue tickets for their own service, as commercial journeys run by First e.g. Service 44 will not accept other operators' tickets. This has greatly increased the cost for passengers using this and other services. Mature student tickets, issued by First, are only valid on their services. The County Council does not provide tickets for mature students. Since November 2005 all season tickets issued by First have been accepted (as per their validity) on these services. In December 2005 a new range of season tickets (valid on all contracted services in the south Malvern Hills area) will be introduced. These tickets will not be accepted on any commercial First service.

It is very early in the life of the new contract to calculate annual figures but returns received so far suggest that there are averages of 290 passengers per day on the eleven journeys each way (plus some evening journeys on three days per week) and has a subsidy per passenger of £1.34. It costs about £120,000 per annum.

The following route is highlighted as it has declined from being one of the core routes in the county into a very patchy service in terms of the level of service now provided.

d) Service 372-374
WORCESTER – KEMPSEY – UPTON-UPON-SEVERN – TEWKESBURY – GLOUCESTER

Service 372/373/374 provided an hourly service between Worcester, Kempsey and Upton-upon-Severn with every other bus extended via Ryall and Tewkesbury to Gloucester. This was provided largely commercially by First (with certain late peak journeys subsidised by Worcestershire County Council).

The service was withdrawn by First on the 4 November 2002 and replaced by a commercial hourly service between Worcester and Upton-upon-Severn until 4 September 2004.

From 4 November 2002 until 29 May 2004 a 2 hourly service was provided on a subsidised basis by Boomerang Bus Company between Upton-upon-Severn and Tewkesbury with connections available to Gloucester and Worcester. Since 2002 a commercial service has been provided on an hourly basis between Tewkesbury and Gloucester by Stagecoach.

From 30 May 2004 a 2 hourly service has been provided on a subsidised basis by Swanbrook Transport between Upton-Upon-Severn, Ryall, Tewkesbury and Gloucester. There are now no connections available to Worcester.

During 2004 the viaduct at Upton-upon-Severn was closed to buses and this coincided with the improvement to Service 363 via Callow End to Worcester and this hastened the termination of the service.

From 5 September 2004 four journeys a day have been provided on a subsidised basis by Astons Coaches between Worcester, Kempsey, Ryall and Upton-upon-Severn.

From 5 September 2004 until 11 June 2005 Worcester to Kempsey was operated commercially every 30 minutes by First.

From 12 June 2005 Worcester to Kempsey is now running every 20 minutes and is provided commercially by First.

The Sunday service has also been revised and was provided by on a subsidised basis by Ann's Coaches between Worcester and Gloucester until 17 April 2004 and is now provided on a subsidised basis by Astons Coaches between Worcester and Tewkesbury.

From December 2004 an improved train service was been introduced between Worcester and Gloucester via Ashchurch (for Tewkesbury).

The current daytime subsidised service between Worcester and Upton-upon-Severn averages 18 passengers per day on the eight journeys and has a subsidy per passenger of £8.47. It costs £47,000 per annum.

The current evening subsidised service between Worcester and Upton-upon-Severn averages 41 passengers per day on the nine journeys and has a subsidy per passenger of £2.17. It costs £28,000 per annum.

The current Sunday subsidised service between Worcester and Tewkesbury averages 37 passengers per day on the 11 journeys and has a subsidy per passenger of £6.70. It costs £11,500 per annum.

Successful routes

e) Service 2

KIDDERMINSTER – BEWDLEY EVENINGS

Service 3

KIDDERMINSTER – STOURPORT EVENINGS

Members suggestion – evening bus from Kidderminster to Bewdley

This is a new experimental service which although in its early days is showing promise.

A key objective of the Connecting Wyre Rural Bus Challenge project is to provide later evening buses connecting the three Wyre Forest Towns. As a result Worcestershire County Council tendered for and awarded local bus contracts to Choice Travel to reintroduce late evening buses from 13 June 2005. The contracts provide hourly late evening buses on routes 2 (Kidderminster-Bewdley) and 3 (Kidderminster-Stourport). These complement the daytime/early evening buses operated on a largely commercial basis by First. The contracts comprise five return journeys on service 2, and three return journeys on service 3.

Table 1 summarises the passenger journey data for the period June – October 2005, inclusive.

Table 1: Choice Travel Routes 2 & 3 Passenger Journeys Summary

	Serv. 2	Per Day	Serv. 3	Per Day
June	198	12.4	198	12.4
July	429	16.5	301	20.1
August	276	14.5	195	7.5
Sept	384	14.8	274	10.5
Oct	605	23.3	265	10.2

Late evening services last operated back in Sept 2003 and therefore the initial figures are promising.

Unfortunately an assault on one of the bus drivers at Kidderminster Railway Station on the evening of 6th August resulted in a short period of operational difficulties. This accounts for the fall in numbers in that month.

The services have been promoted through press advertisements and the journeys included in First Wyre Forest Public Transport Map & Guide (re-published 28th November 2005). WCC and the Warehouse Cinema have teamed up to provide a special ticket promotion from 8th December, whereby bus users will get half price tickets for evening films, until 31st January 2006.

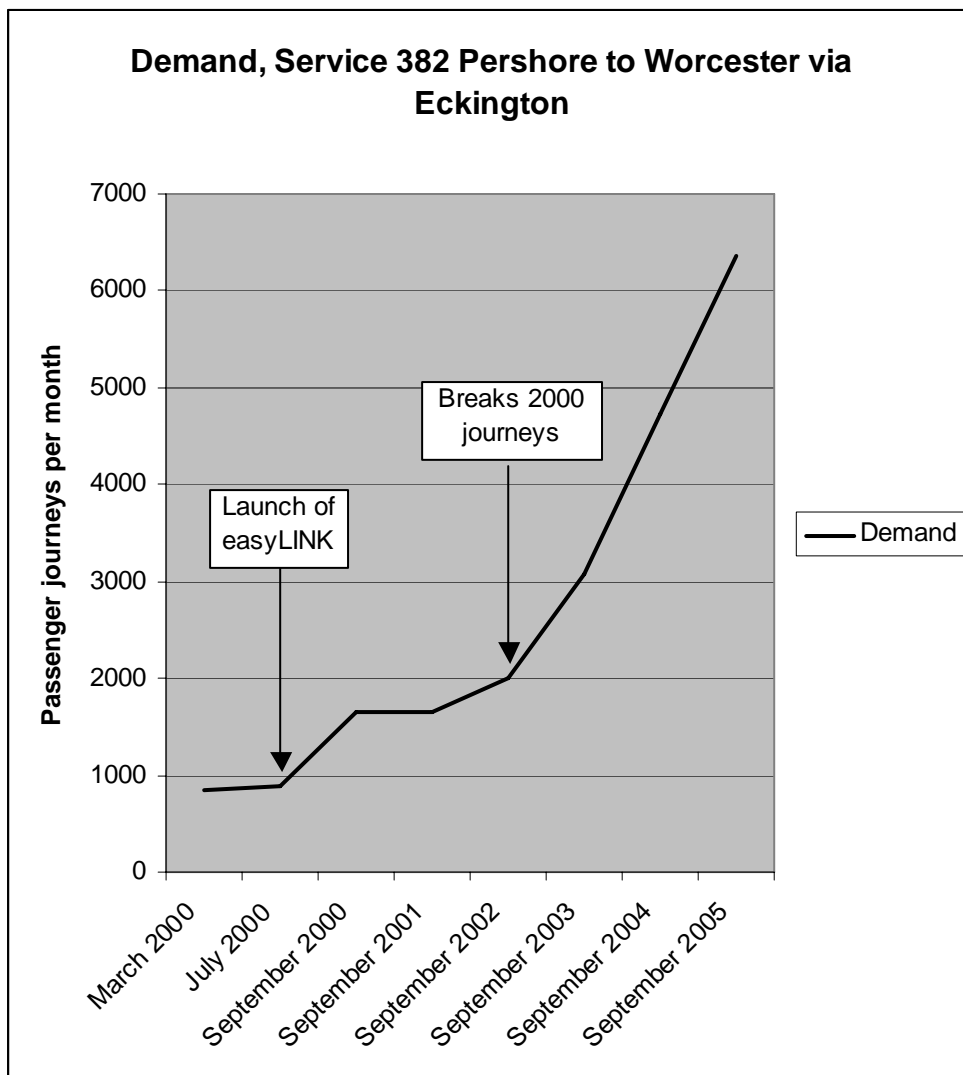
Passenger figures and operational performance will continue to be monitored with a fuller review of progress provided in early Spring 2006.

**f) Service 382
PERSHORE – ECKINGTON - WORCESTER**

This service was the first *easyLINK* service and has shown how introducing a comprehensive high quality service onto a route can lead to dramatic increases in patronage.

Service 382 was re-launched in July 2000, after Worcestershire County Council Public Transport Section submitted a successful Rural Bus Challenge bid in 1999.

Service 382 was the county's first *easyLINK* branded bus service. *easyLINK* services are designed to be frequent, to have regular, comprehensive timetables that are easy to understand, to provide low-floor easy-access modern buses with drivers trained in customer care and disability awareness offering a range of ticket types. There should be well illuminated passenger waiting facilities with shelters and raised kerbs to give level boarding for the benefit of all passengers.



Service 382 operates from the early morning to late evening, seven-days-a-week. It follows a route between Pershore and Worcester that goes through several villages, including Eckington, Defford, Wadborough, Littleworth and Norton providing a level of service to rural areas that may be considered as an attractive alternative to the private car. (Note that another bus service provides the direct service between Pershore and Worcester).

The graph shows that the service recorded 1,661 passenger journeys for the month of September 2000, two months after the launch, showing an immediate increase of approximately double the patronage previously. Apart from a slight levelling off around 2001, the demand has continued to increase. By the end of 2002 demand was growing strongly, and this continued with the service recording 6,354 passenger journeys for the month of September 2005. Further investigation would be necessary to determine the precise reasons for this latter growth, some of which may be due to greater use of the service in Worcester in the evenings and on Sundays for example, where it partly replaces the local city service, and because of the growth of housing at Norton Barracks.

The service is operated under a subsidy-based contract between Astons Coaches and PTG, whereby the operator keeps fare revenue. For the month of September 2005, the subsidy cost calculated at £1.87 per passenger journey.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL BUS SERVICE
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (PMF)

(Has enabled a process to be followed whereby objective decisions can be made when budget pressures occur, and to evaluate proposed new services. They believe it is one of the most important things they do to ensure good value for money.)

All bus services will be assessed according to the following factors:

Factor	Performance/level	Score
Subsidy per passenger	<£1 £1.00-£1.99 £2.00-£2.99 £3.00-£3.99 £4.00-£4.99 >£5.00	5 4 3 2 1 0
Passengers per journey	>20 15-20 10-15 5-10 1-5 0	5 4 3 2 1 0
Availability of other PT services in settlements served <i>(please see note a below)</i>	No other services in period <20% 20-40% 40-60% 60-80% >80% Standards met in period	6 5 4 3 2 1 0
Index of multiple deprivation score of settlements served <i>(please see note b below)</i>	Worst 5% 5-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-95% Best 5%	5 4 3 2 1 0
Primary journey purpose	To main centres of employment To essential shopping To educational facilities To health facilities To secondary centres of employment To non-essential shopping To leisure/tourism facilities More than one purpose (2)	5 5 4 4 3 2 1 6
Car ownership levels in settlements served <i>(please see note c overleaf)</i>	Bottom 25% (lowest ownership) 50-75% 25-50% Top 25% (high levels of car ownership)	6 4 2 0

The total score for each service is assessed by adding the scores in each category.

- a) *The availability of alternative public transport services in each settlement served is calculated in relation to the time period in which the service operates and an overall service frequency standard defined for that time period.*

The main time periods are :-

- Monday to Saturday daytime (0600-1800hrs);*
- Monday to Saturday evenings (0600-1800hrs);*
- Sunday all day (0600-2400hrs).*

The service frequency standards set for each time period are :

- Monday to Saturday daytime – hourly service;*
- Monday to Saturday evening – 2 hourly service;*
- Sunday all day – 2 hourly service.*

The availability of alternative public transport services is calculated by establishing the total number of calls made at each bus stop within each settlement by commercial services only and rail services to a district centre with adequate services/facilities within the specified time period which the tendered service operates (e.g. Monday to Saturday daytime). This figure is then divided by the total number of hours within the time period to give the number of alternatives available per hour. This is then expressed as a % of the defined standard for the time period as above. Thus a settlement with an alternative commercial service operating at an hourly frequency may score lower than a settlement with no alternatives if the tendered service in question was withdrawn.

Definition of settlements :-

East of County – County Parishes

West of County – Super Output Areas (SOA)

Urban areas of Mansfield, Sutton, Kirkby, Worksop, Retford, Newark – Super Output Areas (SOA)

- b) *IMD is defined as a % of the national ranking of the worst County A Super Output Area (SOA).*
- c) *Car ownership levels are defined as the % of total households within each settlement with no car together with households with only 1 car and 2 or more people aged 17 or over in the household.*
- d) *The scores relating associated with IMD, Car ownership and Availability of Alternative PT services are weighted by the population of the settlements served by the tendered service in question.*

Report on progress on actions taken since the previous scrutiny report on bus services (September 2003) from The Head of Waste and Passenger Transport Management in September 2005

Recommendation	Progress
Strongly Recommend	
That the Director of Environmental services develops and co-ordinates a working party, which would include members and officers from the County and the District Councils to develop and implement a countywide concessionary fares scheme.	The Joint Worcestershire Integrated Members and Officers Passenger Transport Forums have been convened and meet four times annually, from which a sub-group has been formed which is working on developing and implementing a County wide concessionary fares scheme. A letter has been sent to all the Chief Executives and lead officers on 29 September proposing an offer from the County Council to each District to 'top up' concessionary fares schemes to give a consistent scheme.
That the issue of home to school transport be investigated further at a later stage, alongside community transport	Home to school transport issues are currently being addressed, initially with the launch on 05 September 2005 of Project Express, and new W routes around the city on which all under 19s can travel free. Initial uptake from the under 19 age group has been high, and if this scheme is successful the model will be used to roll out similar schemes throughout the County. Concessionary fares for community transport are also currently being investigated.
Recommend	
That the County Council Should continue to be pro active in taking forward the implementation of a co-ordinated travel management system backed by a state of the art smartcard ticketing and billing system and linked information systems	The County Council are developing a scheme alongside the concessionary fares work to introduce smartcard technology and is a condition of the offer referred to above.
That the Director of Environmental Services continues to work with all parties to ensure the success of Bus Quality Partnerships	Bus Quality are in existence and have been successful. These partnerships are currently under review to assess effectiveness and purpose, to ensure their continued success.
That the Director of Environmental Services seeks opportunities to initiate the development of further Bus Quality Partnerships throughout the County	See above
Conclusion	
The draft Bus and Information Strategy has identified the benefits that can accrue through a co-ordinated travel management system backed by a state of the art smartcard ticketing and billing system and linked information system. Outputs and targets have been documented as part of the strategy's associated action plan.	The Joint Worcestershire Integrated Members and Officers Passenger Transport Forums have agreed that the Bus and Information Strategy now be reviewed and updated to move from a resource based strategy to a more benefit based one. A co-ordinated travel management system, smart card ticketing and information systems will continue to form part of that strategy.

**PASSENGER TRANSPORT
SCRUTINY TASK GROUP**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NEAREST NEIGHBOUR AUTHORITIES

Name of Authority:	
Population:	
Name and position of person completing questionnaire:	

Question 1:

a) What are your main objectives (briefly) for Passenger Transport?

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Question 2:

a) How do you deliver services? (brief list - ie through park and ride, subsidised services, maxi taxi, flexi link, community transport etc)

b) What is your star project?

Question 3:

a) What is your total spend on Passenger Transport for the last 3 years?

c) What is the average cost per passenger journey (on subsidised routes)?

Question 4:

a) What grants (over and above revenue spending) have you obtained?

b) Are these included in total spend? Yes/No

c) Is funding for your park & ride scheme (if you have one) also included in total spend?
Yes/No

d) If Yes, how much?

Question 5:

a) What are your latest figures on number of passenger journeys (04/05 & 05/06)?

2004/05

2005/06

b) Did you exclude cross boundary journeys from BVPI 102 in 2003/04 (we expected most figures to show a drop in passenger journeys that year, but found that, strangely, most showed a rise)

Question 6

a) Could you describe the process followed when deciding which routes to subsidise (eg do you obtain evidence from the commercial operator about passenger numbers and profit on say an axed route)

b) What is your criteria for deciding whether to have a subsidised route?

c) How do you engage passengers in planning particular routes or services?

Question 7:

What is the maximum amount you are prepared to subsidise? (eg £2per passenger journey)

Question 8:

Other than BVPI 103 & 104, how else do you measure or achieve satisfaction – do you have any other data?

Question 9:

Do you provide free passenger transport for young people? Yes/No

Question 10:

What, in your opinion, is the most important thing that your authority does to ensure good value for money in passenger transport service provision?

Please email your completed form to Stella Wood swood@worcestershire.gov.uk
Tel (01905) 766610 by Friday 6 January 2006.

Many thanks for completing this questionnaire. Your views and comments will be used to inform Worcestershire County Council's scrutiny of Passenger Transport in Worcestershire. A copy of the final scrutiny report will be sent to you on completion in Spring 2006. If, in the meantime, you have any questions or would like further information about the scrutiny please contact Stella Wood.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

Questionnaire For Nearest Neighbour Authorities Summary of Narrative Responses to Questions 1, 6 & 10

Question 1:

a) What are your main objectives (briefly) for Passenger Transport?

COUNTY E

Our strategy incorporates the policies and aspirations towards all other forms of road-based collective passenger transport. This broad perspective has been chosen for a number of reasons:

- to encourage a co-ordinated approach to the discharge of the county council's transport responsibilities across the whole range of vehicle capacities
- to match the existing integrated procurement of transport for all sectors of the authority, maximising the available synergy to provide a framework for the co-ordination of County End District Council interests in the fields of planning and taxis
- to ensure a coherent and equitable approach to all modes and providers in the field of road passenger transport
- to maximise the integrity of the council's road transport policies within the overall context of the Local Transport Plan and other corporate objectives.

COUNTY F

To provide access to services, employment and shopping where there is a tangible need and it is not met by commercial transport services.

COUNTY C

- To provide an hourly service or better to 95% within an 800 metre walk of the residents of the county, 76% in rural areas.
- To provide for the essential transport needs of the remaining 5%
- To deliver countywide coverage of accessible services for residents unable to use conventional public transport.

COUNTY A

- Protect and enhance the environment through modal change
- maintaining and extending network coverage and frequency
- improving the quality of passenger transport services improving bus infrastructure
- reducing the cost of travel and improving integrated ticketing
- to grow the bus market through improving information and the marketing of bus services
- improving personal safety and security
- promote the economy of urban centres through increasing sustainable accessibility
- promote integration between modes, between land use and transport planning, and with other sectors
- promote the economy of rural areas
- reduce social exclusion and rural isolation

COUNTY D

The Bus Strategy describes how the Council creates the conditions in which commercial bus services can thrive, whilst ensuring that subsidised services, which best meet local needs and provide best value for money, are provided where necessary to supplement the commercial network. It identifies a hierarchy of services: Premium Routes, Hourly services, Feeder services. Through this strategy, the County Council aims to achieve an overall 2% growth per annum in bus use.

COUNTY B

- to maintain and seek to improve opportunities to access important local services and facilities (for the general public and for specific groups at risk of social exclusion)
- to reverse the historic decline in bus use
- to improve the quality of public transport travel, and reduce barriers to the use of public transport (information, image, reliability and interchange)

- to improve satisfaction with public transport

1b) What is your biggest obstacle to achieving your objectives?

County E

Cutting uneconomical services against pressure to continue.

Ascertaining where new demand areas are. Continued level of commercial de-registrations

COUNTY F

Modern aspirations by residents to choose where to access services, employment and shopping based on the flexibility of the car which cannot be reflected by bus services

COUNTY C

Funding constraints and resistance to change by existing users

COUNTY A

- Actions by commercial operators
- Congestion and increasing costs of local bus service provision
- Funding constraints
- Legislative framework

COUNTY D

The challenges particularly affecting bus services are:

- Meeting public expectations for increased quality and increased mobility
- Increasing traffic congestion impacting on service reliability and efficiency
- New population located away from traditional bus routes
- Services and jobs located away from traditional centres
- Reducing the air pollution and other environmental impacts of buses whilst maintaining accessibility
- Ensuring essential access in low density rural areas
- Rising cost pressures for bus operation, especially relative to the cost of car travel
- Meeting the aspiration for a model shift from private cars to buses, especially in congested locations
- Enabling continued economic growth without unacceptable traffic congestion
- Meeting the public wish for better ticketing systems, including dealing with any changes to concessionary fare arrangements.

County B

The continuing increase in the real costs of transport operation, which has led (and is continuing to lead) to above inflation increases in commercial bus fares, withdrawal of commercial services, and increases in the cost of supported service contracts.

Question 6

a) Could you describe the process followed when deciding which routes to subsidise?

County E

Require evidence where available from commercial operators then seek what cost is required to ensure stays within £5 level

County F

We seek passenger numbers and fares income from the operator

County C

Services provided to compliment the hourly network – if an alternative exists unlikely to replace

County A

use Performance Management Framework (PMF) to enable all supported bus services to be assessed so that objective decisions can be made when budget pressures occur and to evaluate proposed new services.

Network area managers also play a key role in determining the best pattern for service provision in light of their experience, and information received through customer surveys and feedback.

County D
(see answer to 6b)

County B

For a commercial journey or route threatened by withdrawal – obtain passenger data from operator, and from surveys if time; obtain views of local parish transport representatives and local members; consider relative priority of service against county council guidelines (attached) and whether likely to meet subsidy / trip guidelines.

For new service being established to meet perceived needs – as above, but using estimates of likely patronage.

For existing services – all contracts in an area (including mainstream school transport requirements) are reviewed every 4 years (approx), using survey data, passenger information from operators, feedback from local transport representatives and local members, and considering whether still meet WCC guidelines and subsidy / trip criteria.

Similar process followed if service reductions needed to stay within budget – identify low or medium priority elements that have a relatively high subsidy / trip and whose withdrawal would be likely to result in the necessary financial savings (this is a complex exercise requiring knowledge of what parts of each service are less well used and how different elements of the service are likely to be costed – not usually possible to list subsidy / trip as savings from withdrawal will depend on negotiation

6b) What are your criteria for deciding whether to have a subsidised route?

County E

See the Passenger Transport Strategy where we have a minimum service level criteria. Also have a cost per passenger figure of £5.00

County F

We use an Excel based tool (known as APTT) which assesses cost per passenger but weights the value with a number of accessibility factors (50%/ cost 50% accessibility).

County C

Meets 95% network or essential needs of remaining 5%.

County A

Use Performance Management Framework (see appendix 9 to the scrutiny report)

County D

Primarily on the basis of the social need for the service and the contribution which it makes to accessibility, but taking into account the target of increasing bus use. Subsidy will only be provided where the Council is satisfied that the need to be met by that service is not met by an existing service and can not be catered for in some other way at lower cost. When considering subsidy, the Council will take into account:

- the overall budget for service subsidy;
- the cost of subsidising this service;
- the results of passenger surveys on any comparable service;
- the views of consultees;
- the alternatives available within 400 metres of the service; and
- the contribution which the service will make to meeting the Council's accessibility targets.

Particular account will be taken of the subsidy cost per passenger journey, (a combination of (ii) and (iii)).

County B

The County Council will:

- identify a network of strategic and urban services on which it will seek to maintain acceptable service levels;
- work with 'accessibility partnerships' to carry out accessibility assessments and identify potential ways of meeting access needs, which may include proposals for supported services;
- work with the Community Areas and local communities to identify their transport and access needs and appropriate ways of meeting these; and
- use experimental services to test demand, or to pilot innovative ways of providing services (subject to availability of funding).

Services that are identified for support as a result of the above may include conventional bus services,

demand responsive transport, or community / voluntary transport as considered most appropriate in the circumstances.

The Council will critically review the justification for services where the subsidy per passenger trip exceeds the following:

- £1.25 per passenger trip for school services under priorities H4 or M3 above;
- £2.30 per passenger trip for urban local services;
- £3.50 per passenger trip for all other services.

(The lower values for school and urban services reflect the shorter trip distances and lower fares paid on these types of service).

Question 6c) How do you engage passengers in planning particular routes or services?

County E

Long term planning we would undertake surveys, short term planning is determined by commercial data.

County F

Consult on bus
Consult Parish
Consult Local Member
Notices on buses

County C

We consult on major route changes to both of the above service provisions and react to passenger comments if appropriate.

County A

The County Council have launched a Bus Users Forum as a consultation group regarding future service developments

Meetings are held with local community and voluntary groups to assist in obtaining feedback regarding service priorities and requirements

County D

Following consultation with operators, accessibility modelling and initial formulation of ideas by County Council officers, the Council will consult Parish, Town and District Councils and any other local bodies with a known interest in bus services in the area. The effectiveness of this consultation will be enhanced, especially in the case of full scale area reviews, by:

- Encouraging all Parish and Town Councils to appoint a local Transport Representative
- Contacting all Councils 3 to 4 months in advance of the formal consultation,
- Arranging by the County Council of at least 1 joint meeting of local Councils and Transport Representatives, and encouraging formulation of a common view amongst Parishes on the same service.
- Consulting local schools in parallel with officers from the Learning and Culture directorate.
- Displaying at bus stops and on buses early in the consultation period to encourage individuals to make any views known to their local Council or Transport Representative.
- Encouraging local media to publicise the review and invite people, through their local Council, to make their views known.

County B

Long-established system of parish transport representatives from whom views are sought – ideally through meetings of local route-based parish groups, although have in recent years more often by correspondence due to lack of staff resource to organise regular meetings. Now we are also being invited to community planning meetings in some areas. In wigglybus areas local community groups have played a very strong role in helping to plan the services, but this has been very time consuming.

Our recent Best Value Review identified the need to develop a consistent approach to community / user involvement that could be resourced across the county – we have employed TAS Partnership to carry out this review.

Question 10:

What, in your opinion, is the most important thing that your authority does to ensure good value for money in passenger transport service provision?

County E

Following the Best Value Review (Audit Commission website) the restructure and the integration of all of the County's PT functions (Education, Social Care, CT, local Bus and possibly health) has certainly highlighted the cost of transport provision and wastage and remains a key issue to progress.

County F

Focus on providing routes which meet tangible needs and, where possible, in a form which will encourage more passengers to travel.

County C

www.County

C.gov.uk/index/highways/public_transport/bus_train_services/bus_services/bus_routes_map.htm

COUNTY A

Continually reviewing the network to ensure that the limited resources are used in the right places.

The introduction of the Performance Management Framework has enabled a process to be followed whereby objective decisions can be made when budget pressures occur and to evaluate proposed new services.

County D

Although the area is largely a rural county, around 80% of its population lives in towns or large villages, a land-use pattern which does generate sufficient demand for a viable network of frequent bus services. The Council's policy is to create the preconditions for effective and successful commercial bus operation, with the result that any available subsidy can then be focused on areas of low population density where commercial operation is much more unlikely.

- Bus lanes, bus gates and other bus priority measures can be provided where traffic congestion would otherwise delay buses (but at present cannot be regularly enforced)
- Highway network design to ensure preferential access for buses to places to and from which the greatest number of people wish to travel
- Investment in high quality waiting and information facilities at bus stops and interchanges
- Careful attention to bus stop location and pedestrian routes to and from bus stops
- Arranging traffic signals to give priority to buses and to minimise variations in journey time
- Design and maintenance of the highway to give bus passengers a smooth and comfortable ride
- Management of roadworks, using powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004, to minimise delays to buses
- Using powers to restrict and enforce parking and waiting, to ensure that bus routes and bus stops are not obstructed by stationary vehicles
- Working in partnership with District Councils to ensure that new developments are located and designed to facilitate and encourage bus use, and that finances are available from developers for any necessary bus facilities and services.

County B

Integrates public transport contracts very closely with school / college transport requirements, with careful specification of tenders to give packages of work that can be operated in a cost-effective manner

<i>List of documents consulted during this exercise.</i>
<i>Worcestershire County Council Documents</i>
Worcestershire County Council's Bus and Information Strategy (Jan 2004)
Provisional Local Transport Plan 2 (2006-2011) & relevant Cabinet Papers March 2005 & June 2005 (which includes reference to the Annual Progress Report for the 1 st Local Transport Plan [2001 – 2006])
Best Value Performance Indicators 102, 103 & 104 covering (mostly) 2000 – 20004/05
Spreadsheets (A3) showing passenger transport budget for 2005/06, and out-turn for 2004/05, 2003/04 and 2002/03
Use of Resources Assessment - Value for Money (VFM) Profile report 01 county councils 2005
Use of Resources Assessment - Value for Money (VFM) Profile report 02 single tier councils 2005
Part 1 and Part 2 of the Directorate Performance Plan for Environmental Services 2005 – 06
Agenda and Minutes of the Joint Members Passenger Transport Forum for meetings on 28 Oct 2004, 11 February, 8 June, 3 August, 5 November 2005 (Officers Forum), 25 January and 22 February 2006 .
Worcester: Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town - Travel Behaviour Research Baseline Survey 2004 for Worcs CC
Details of Local Transport Plan 1 and 2 consultations on passenger transport and details of other surveys from the consultation database
Examples of paper timetable and other information available in Worcestershire
Redditch Partnership's response to inform the Worcestershire Children and Young People Strategic Plan (section on access to services – transport)
Criteria used by Worcestershire County Council to determine which services are subsidised (agenda item 2, Passenger Transport Scrutiny Task Group meeting on 15 December 2005)
Agendas, notes of meetings (and documents available) of the scrutiny task group's visits and meetings as detailed in Appendix 1.

<i>National Documents</i>
The Future of Transport – Government White Paper Sept 2004
Department for Transport Annual Report 2005 (Chapter 5)
Commission for Integrated Transport – The bus industry – encouraging local delivery Chapt 2 – Bus Industry Trends
Audit Commission’s Use of Resources (guidance for councils) June 2005
Delivery Chain Analysis for Bus Services in England prepared jointly by the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission (December 2005)
Speech by Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to the Confederation of Passenger Transport. Delivered: 26 January 2006.
Transport Operations Research Group (TORG) report of a workshop held on 26 January 2006 on a 10 year vision for Demand Responsive Transport.
<i>Other Authorities documents</i>
County route maps and paper timetable information from Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire and Borough of Telford and Wrekin.
Cambridgeshire County Council’s presentation on developing relationships with operators
Wyre Forest’s concessionary Travel Task and Finish Group survey (7 Oct 2005)
Scrutiny Review of Local Transport by Malvern Hills DC in March 2005 and minutes of their Council meeting on 10 May 2005
Wychavon District Council’s Rural Transport Scrutiny Team Report October 2005
Bristol City Council’s Best Value Review on Integrated Transport and Final Report off the Bus Services Select Committee
Responses to questionnaires from nearest neighbour authorities