



**Community
Transport
Association**

Response to the
Department for Transport

Options for strengthening bus passenger representation

Closing Date: 17 March 2008

The Community Transport Association

The CTA is a rapidly growing national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. CTA UK promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.

Voluntary and community transport exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion.

The CTA is the representative body for third sector passenger transport operators in the UK. CTA Member organisations are involved in the provision of transport, especially accessible services.

The CTA is the UK's largest provider of training, advice and information on accessible, voluntary and community transport provision. The CTA is part - funded by the Department for Transport, the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Regional Development (Northern Ireland).

CTA's Response to Consultation

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department for Transport's consultation process. Our response takes the form of answers, where this is appropriate to the 12 specific questions contained in the consultation document.

Contact Details

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Q1a Do you agree with the aim of our proposal?

The CTA supports the concept of increasing the influence that bus passengers have in the way that the network is organized at a strategic level. An England-wide body would provide this function, which would influence Department for Transport policy and through the influence that the Department has with Local Authorities, the planning decisions of all English public transport services.

We believe that it is very important that, whatever body is supported or set up, its remit is restricted to strategic issues. If, as a result of this process, the need for a robust complaints handling procedure is identified, then this should be a role for local transport planners to cover.

Q1b Do you feel that the body should cover any items not included above?

There is no mention of community transport in the consultation paper. The CTA believes that strategic level debate needs to be arranged about services designed to fill the gaps in the public transport infrastructure, whether these gaps are due to unavailability of transport or unsuitability of the vehicles.

Within Wales strategic decisions have been made by the Welsh Assembly Government that have seen an increase in community transport funding from local authorities. This debate needs to take place.

Q1c Do you think that there are any items covered above that shouldn't be?

It is important to ensure that any body supported by Government does not take away any consultative or representation roles of existing bodies, such as the Community Transport Association.

Q2a Is option 1 your preferred option and why?

The CTA does not support option 1. Reasons explained in answer to questions 2b and 3b.

Q2b Do you have any further comments on the role that existing non-statutory bodies may have in representing the interests of bus passengers?

Existing bodies, like Bus Users UK, Bus Appeals Body, etc. have a role, which is very different than the role we envisage for the new strategic level body. It could be argued that these existing bodies could change over to this new role but, the CTA believes, that any dilution of the purpose of the body is likely to lead to non-strategic matters arising.

Q3a Is option 2 your preferred option and why?

The CTA supports option 2. Reasons explained in answer to question 2b and 3b.

Q3b What do you think should be the key features of the statutory bus passenger champion body?

The key features of the statutory bus passenger champion body should be:

Initial remit should include road passenger. (Any attempt to combine this role with other forms of passenger transport will make the views confused and compromised because of the conflict between road and rail, etc.)

Body should be independent and able to provide internally generated opinion on issues related to road passenger transport. It should also be possible to be commissioned by Government departments to examine specific policy issues from a bus passenger's perspective.

Funding for the work of the committee should be based on a base line settlement to cover practical aspects including advertising to promote public inputs, commissioning of surveys and consultancy work. Additional funding should be provided by the Department for Transport or any other Government Department whenever specific policy enquiries are requested.

As far as possible, the committee should reflect the social, economic, ethnicity, disability, gender, rurality and age profile of the country's bus passengers.

The selection criteria should include the degree to which prospective committee members can explain how they will gain the understanding and knowledge to represent the views of a number of other bus passengers. This may be through local voluntary organisations, public meetings or any other suitable method. Representatives from organisations mentioned in Option 1 would probably be able to fulfil these criteria.

Q4a Is option 3A your preferred option and why?

The CTA does not support option 3A. The CTA believes that any attempt to combine the envisaged role with other forms of passenger transport will make the views it expresses confused and compromised because of the conflict between road and rail, etc. This conflict should be resolved at a political level.

Q4b What changes do you think will be needed in order for Passenger Focus to take on bus work?

Not applicable.

Q4c Do you have any further comments on the role that Passenger Focus might take in relation to bus travel?

No

Q5a Is option 3B your preferred option and why?

The CTA does not support option 3B. Reasons given in answer to question 4a.

Q5b How do you think that we can ensure that there is no duplication between this committee's interest in rail and that of Passenger Focus?

Not applicable