

CTA MEMBERS BRIEFING

Department for Transport Bus Reform Workshops 2015

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to share its views regarding proposals for this most significant reform of the bus market and also encourages its members to participate fully in the debate. One way to contribute is to attend one of the Department for Transport's (DfT) series of seven Bus Reform Workshops, in five locations across England, in September and October 2015.

These workshops aim to give local authorities, bus operators and other interested stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on bus franchising, the Buses Bill and alternatives to franchising. The focus of the events is on bus services in England, outside London. Our Chief Executive, Bill Freeman and our Director of Practice and Policy Gareth Blackett will be attending events in Manchester and Bristol to help put forward the views expressed in this document.

The CTA is keen to work with stakeholders to ensure that the Bill offers the best deal for local communities and feels strongly that community transport should feature prominently in any new regulatory regime. We also passionately believe in the benefits of greater integration and better relationships between community transport and the private sector: pushing for community transport services to be mainstreamed not just seen as a last resort. To that end the CTA has produced this briefing note for its members regarding the Buses Bill.

The CTA believes the Buses Bill can deliver better outcomes for passengers, especially those who use community transport and have been particularly affected by the recent budget cuts; older people, those with disabilities, the unemployed, younger people and those in low income jobs. The CTA believes the voluntary and community sector is uniquely positioned to improve the passenger experience and feels the forthcoming Buses Bill should be used to improve accessibility to and affordability of bus services in rural areas and small towns as well as large metropolitan zones; in many rural areas where bus routes are unprofitable it is community transport operators who provide key services to local residents and we hope the Bill will help embed, sustain and grow such marginal – but vitally important - types of provision.

The CTA believes the Buses Bill should –

1. **Devolve** responsibility for bus regulation to appropriate local authorities at County Council level – Strategic Transport Authorities - in addition to those Passenger Transport Executives with an elected Mayor. Strategic Transport Authorities should be as broad as possible across existing local government structures. This will enable greater community input into the design of new routes, as well as greater accountability for and visibility of the transport needs of more vulnerable passengers.

- That devolved Strategic Transport Authorities responsibilities include control over timetables, fares and ticketing; *the CTA requests the powers are extended to those currently held by regional traffic commissioners regarding service registration*
 - That devolved Strategic Transport Authorities have a statutory duty to develop & consult independent scrutiny frameworks. These should include bus user/consumer groups that are afforded significant regulatory influence, including groups representative of older and disabled passengers as well as mainstream passengers.
 - That devolved Strategic Transport Authorities assume responsibility for currently disparate local authority transport budgets in their respective areas – i.e. Adult Social Care & Education – to enable integrated delivery and increase overall network capacity. *In addition, the CTA believes this should include Department of Health budgets for health-related transport.*
2. **Franchise** bus services via partnership mechanisms which integrate community transport into the overall bus network - feeder services for example or subcontracted marginal services which in itself will help to remove some of the barriers to inclusion faced by less advantaged passengers.
- Franchising models should be developed locally by Strategic Transport Authorities and determined by local market conditions; e.g. where local relationships are positive *voluntary* partnerships should be developed, but more mandatory measures may be necessary in less favourable operating environments. The CTA supports voluntary partnerships in this respect.
 - Franchising should enable innovation in the market in terms of business models – for example, consortium bids and joint franchising with larger operators, as well as chances for local communities to develop and trial new routes which may currently be outside of the tendered bus network. The CTA believes a TfL London Service Permit type scheme should be included in any franchising models
 - Franchising authorities should have due regard to the make-up of the current market, especially considering small and medium-sized enterprises.

Call to CTA Members

The CTA encourages its members to attend one of the DfT briefing sessions in September and October and to use this briefing note to highlight the opportunities for community and voluntary transport that the forthcoming Buses Bill should enable in the interests of local communities and less advantaged passengers. The CTA believes the Bill can embed and integrate community transport into mainstream bus networks as well as improve the understanding of the work of the sector.

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