



Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority

**Minutes of the 180th meeting of the PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY
23rd NOVEMBER 2000
(10.30 a.m. – 11.45 a.m.)**

PRESENT:

Councillor T.D. Marshall (in the Chair)

Councillors Boyack, Flynn, J.S. Green, M.A. Green, Hanson, Holt, Keating, Mulgrove, Ord, Spring, Thompson and P. Wood.

IN ATTENDANCE

D. Johnson, B. Middleton, M. Buckingham, P. Fenwick, G. Reid and S. Wilson.

Representing Nexus

M.J. Parker, T. McCrady, B.G. Garner and L. Robinson

41. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Kirby and D.L. Wood, it having been agreed that the Chairman should convey to Councillor Kirby the Authority's best wishes for a speedy recovery from his recent operation.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th September 2000 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

43. PTA/NEXUS ACCOUNTS 1999/2000: DISTRICT AUDIT MANAGEMENT LETTERS

Steve Nicklin of District Audit gave a presentation on the circulated Management Letters in respect of the Accounts of the PTA and Nexus for 1999/2000.

Noting that overall the Authority had in place appropriate arrangements to meet its stewardship responsibilities and that there were no significant issues arising from examination of its financial systems, it was nevertheless felt that there was scope to strengthen arrangements for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption. A review of Financial Regulations was recommended here. As with last year's Management Letter, the financing of future expenditure on the New Tyne Crossing and Sunderland Direct projects remained key challenges. The Authority also needed to continue to respond to the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 and give consideration in due course to Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers and well as policies for Whistleblowing and Anti-fraud and Corruption. In response to queries he confirmed that no instances of fraud similar to those found in other authorities by the Audit Commission had been found in Tyne and Wear. A positive response had been made to the challenge of Best Value and the Authority now needed to develop meaningful objectives against which its performance locally could be measured.

The Deputy Clerk and Treasurer said that proposals to meet the several recommendations by the District Auditor would be brought forward in due course. The Authority's financial systems had been sufficiently robust to pick up the one minor incident of fraud that had occurred in the course of cash collection at the Tyne Tunnel and appropriate action had been taken promptly. Only a very small amount of money had been involved.

The Director of Finance and Administration for Nexus said the Executive was pleased with the outcome of the Audit. The operational deficit of £300k had been further reduced to £200k and it was hoped to meet the break-even objective by the end of the financial year. Amongst key factors that would contribute to this was the increased revenue from greater sales of DaySavers, a reduction in the costs of fraud through fare evasion and the anticipated higher ridership over the forthcoming festive period.

The Chairman observed that the reduction in the operating deficit from £4m when the target was first set to its present level was no mean achievement and reflected the positive changes that Nexus had made to its organisation in recent years.

RESOLVED – That the Report be received and noted.

44. BEST VALUE: PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Submitted: Report of the Clerk and the Director General detailing half-year service performance against targets included in the Best Value Performance Plan 2000 and advising of future proposals to enable performance against strategic objectives and priorities to be monitored and reviewed together with work being undertaken on next year's Plan.

Appendix A to the Report was updated with the following details in respect of performance at the Tyne Tunnel:

Service Priority	1999/2000 Actual	2000/01 Target	Performance (Apr-Sept)
Cost (income p.a.)	8.66m	8.8m	4.33m
Reliability (number of hours closed for repairs)	0	50	25
Customer satisfaction			
1. Number of complaints received	45	20	119
2. % resolved within 5 days	60% tolls increase complaints – not yet resolved	100%	60%
3. air quality (carbon monoxide levels)	25ppm	25ppm	25ppm
Traffic flows (annual)	10.4	10.8m	5.45

Nexus explained that data on the take-up of child concessionary travel was awaiting the full issue of Identity Cards. Details of how the reliability and punctuality of the Metro were assessed would be circulated to Members for information in due course.

RESOLVED – That the Report be noted and that a Performance Management Seminar for Members be held on 14th December 2000 at 11.00 a.m. in Nexus House.

45. BEST VALUE: UPDATE

Having agreed that Review proposals should be referred to the Transport Advisory Committees for consideration and comment, it was:

RESOLVED – That the circulated Report of the Clerk be noted and, arising therefrom, that approval be given to:

- (i) the Best Value Review Brief for the Tyne Tunnel as set out in Appendix A;
- (ii) the staged approach to the Accessibility Best Value Review as set out in Appendix B together with the engagement of the University of Newcastle's Department of Civil Engineering to undertake Stage One; and

(iii) the commissioning of a Value Study in connection with the Concessionary Travel Best Value Review as outlined in Appendix C.

46. THREE-YEAR PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN: GUIDANCE ON PREPARATION

RESOLVED – That, as recommended in the circulated Report of the Clerk, Nexus be advised that the draft Plan should reflect the objectives and strategies included in the Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan.

47. DISABLED PEOPLES PROTECTION POLICY/ACCESS AND MOBILITY POLICY STATEMENT

RESOLVED – That the adoption as corporate policy documents by Nexus of the circulated Disabled Peoples Protection Policy and Access and Mobility Policy Statement be noted together with the commissioning of an access audit of all Nexus premises including Metro Stations, Travel Centres and Offices. Further, given the improvements in the relevant technology in recent years, that the possibility of providing toilet facilities for the disabled at Metro stations be examined in consultation with the District Councils.

48. CARE SERVICES REVIEW: UPDATE

Having been advised of the favourable impressions of the range of public transport facilities and services available in Tyne and Wear gained by representatives of the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee and the Commission for Integrated Transport during recent visits to the area and also of the continuing dialogue with the Health Action Zone Co-ordinator on the development of common criteria for use by General Practitioners in determining eligibility for membership of the Service, it was:

RESOLVED – That the overall success of the Review be noted and that, subject to the minor amendments detailed in the circulated Report, the operation of Care Services in its new format be endorsed.

49. CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PUBLIC TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Flynn, as Leader of Newcastle City Council, said that the Metro service had been invaluable to last year's Millennium celebrations and joined with the Chairman in agreeing that the Authority's appreciation should be passed on to those staff who volunteered to work on New Year's Eve. As the Capital was not having a similar organised celebration this year he had no hesitation in agreeing to the Director General's suggestion that the Mayor of London be invited to be a guest at Newcastle's festivities in order to see at first hand how public transport could contribute towards the success of the event which was expected to be attended by as many as 100,000 people.

RESOLVED – That, with the Metro service ending at 0230 on New Year's Day, the levels of service provision proposed for the Christmas and New Year Period as set out in the circulated Report of the Director General be noted and that details of the main bus corridors to be secured on Boxing Day be circulated to Members for information.

50. RAIL FRANCHISING

Presenting his Report, the Director General highlighted the potential advantages of Nexus being involved in the appropriate Business Unit for the Northern Franchise and the transfer of the revenue risk on the Sunderland-Newcastle line to the operator but expressed concern at the effects on local services that might arise from delays in awarding the franchises. It was therefore agreed that the Chairman should raise this with the Strategic Rail Authority.

RESOLVED – That the latest position in relation to the East Coast Main Line, Transpennine and Northern franchises as set out in the circulated Report of the Director General be noted and that FirstGroup, another of the companies shortlisted for the Transpennine franchise be invited to give a presentation to Members on their bid.

51. TRAVEL PLANS: PROGRESS

During discussion reference was made to the importance of good public transport access to all types and sizes of development whether by employees, customers or visitors. Nexus confirmed that it was a statutory consultee in the local planning process and that the public transport implications of all applications were fully weighed and an appropriate response made in each case. However, the final

decisions in all instances, unless involving the Secretary of State, were for the five planning authorities in Tyne and Wear to determine. Having agreed to support the stance taken by the Passenger Transport Executive Group in relation to the taxation of discounted travel incentive and that the Chairman should write accordingly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it was

RESOLVED – That, as advised in the circulated Report of the Director General, the development of a proactive approach to Travel Plan promotion involving the use of a mobile marketing and information bus be noted and that details of the individual Plans of Nexus and the five District Councils be circulated to Members.

52. REVIEW OF QUALITY BUS ROUTES

Asked whether the concentration of attention on such key routes might not serve to emphasise the shortcomings in the standards of infrastructure provision on other routes, the Chairman said that such concerns would form the basis of the ongoing dialogue with bus operators in order to deliver the objectives of the Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan. With regard to the further improvements to bus travel in Gateshead as proposed in the Appendix to the Report, it was suggested that these should be extended to include Birtley. In order to aid future discussion the Director General said Nexus would be bringing forward a complete listing of all bus priority measures currently in place in Tyne and Wear.

RESOLVED – That, having noted the positive impact on passenger perception and the use of public transport arising from the Quality Corridors introduced to date, further initiatives in line with the Quality Partnership provisions of the Transport Bill be brought forward by Nexus as recommended in the circulated Report of the Director General.

53. DAYSAVER: EXTENSION OF EVENING PROMOTION

RESOLVED - That, as recommended in the circulated Report of the Director General, the 50% reduction in the price of Daysaver tickets after 1830 hrs be continued and reviewed in October 2001 and that the Chairman propose to bus operators in Tyne and Wear that they offer similar discounts to their customers.

54. REVIEW OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2000/2001

RESOLVED – That the variations to the Capital Programme for 2000/2001 as set out in the circulated Report of the Deputy Clerk and Treasurer and the Director General be approved.

55. DISPOSAL OF STATION HOUSE, BENTON METRO STATION

RESOLVED – That, as recommended in the circulated Report of the Director General and subject to the retention of the ground floor workshop/storage area, approval be given to the disposal at current market value of Station House, Benton as shown on the accompanying Plan, such premises being surplus to Metro operational requirements.

56. TYNE TUNNEL TOLLS INCREASE: UPDATE

While the principles of democracy were fully supported, concern was expressed at the position in which the Authority now found itself as a result of the legislative process it was required to follow in seeking an increase in tolls at the Tunnel. This was at odds with the circumstances applying to the operators of Metro, bus, ferry and local rail services where changes could be made comparatively at will. Extensive consultation had been carried out during the parliamentary processes that had been necessary to obtain the Tyne Tunnel Act 1998.

This had made it quite clear that an increase in tolls would be needed in order for the Authority to have the resources to finance the development of the proposals for the New Tyne Crossing, a major project of regional significance. From previous experience it could have been expected that the process might have taken around eight months to complete but the campaign waged by the principal objector had meant that this period might well be doubled. The consequent loss of revenue – currently estimated to be in the region of £150,000 per month - would have to be borne from the present Tunnel Revenue Account as would the costs of holding the Public Inquiry, all of which fell to be met by the Council Tax payers of Tyne and Wear. The Chairman recalled that in July 1995 the Authority had responded to a Government consultation on how the procedure for increases might be simplified and had put forward a number of ways in which these might be improved but there had been no further developments. In the circumstances he therefore proposed to draw this to the attention of the Secretary of State and to appropriate local Members of Parliament.

RESOLVED – That the present position as set out in the circulated Report of the Engineer and the Deputy Clerk and Treasurer be noted and, arising there from, the Public Inquiry into the tolls increase application be held in North Tyneside and that approval be given to the appointment of Counsel.

57. SUNDERLAND DIRECT

The Director General advised that he had been informed by Railtrack that the present problem regarding the trading position of the main contractor for the construction of the project would not result in any delay in the forecast completion date.