



Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority

212th Meeting of Passenger Transport Authority

25 November 2004

Present:

Councillor: D Wood (In the Chair)

Councillors: Green, Hanson, Hodson, Keating, Lawson, D Ord, O'Shea, Shipley, Sleightholme and P Wood

In Attendance: P Woods, P Fenwick, I Poll, C Crow, R Hibbert, C Warren, J Curran

Representing Nexus: M Parker, B Garner, S Atkinson, K McKay, A Lee

41. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bolland, A Ord and Clare.

42. **FORMER COUNCILLOR G NUGENT**

The Chairman announced the death of former Councillor G Nugent who had been Chair of the Passenger Transport Authority and asked Members to stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

43. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising:-

a) **Rail Issues Update**

(Minute No. 37 refers)

The Director General explained that the Railway Bill was to be published today. An announcement was expected from the Secretary of State concerning the winding up of the Strategic Rail Authority. There was some concern that the Government and the Department for Transport were likely as part of this process to take away PTE/PTA involvement in the franchise process for local rail services in their area. This would clearly be a retrograde step and was not in line with previous pronouncements in relation to the rail review. The Director General undertook to bring a detailed report to the next meeting outlining the implications and concerns.

The Director General referred to a proposal from Grand Central Railways to introduce a new rail service from Sunderland to London via the Durham Coast. It was important to show support for this proposal and any which would bring more services along the Durham coast. He undertook to report on progress at the January meeting.

A member welcomed this proposal which was important for Sunderland as a City. He expressed concern about the additional services from the City this was something which Sunderland had lobbied for hard in previous years and had not received favourable response from the SRA.

b) Conference: Developing Second Round Local Transport Plans (LTP)

(Minute No. 39 refers)

Councillor Hodson had attended the conference which had been very useful and dovetailed with the work being done by Policy Officers working on the LTP.

44. PETITION: RYHOPE HOSPITAL BUS STOP – SOUTHBOUND A1018

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information Act) 1985, the Chair agreed to accept this petition as a tabled item in view of the need to consider this before the next meeting of the Authority.

The petition which had 152 signatures requested as follows:-

“We the undersigned respectfully request the re-instatement of the above (i.e. Ryhope Hospital Bus Stop – Southbound A1018) as soon as possible”.

RESOLVED – That the petition be received.

45. AUDIT COMMISSION ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTERS

Submitted: Report of the Clerk and Treasurer to the PTA (copies attached to Official Minutes).

I Wallace (Audit Commission) introduced the report and L Calder commented on the issues highlighted in the inspection letter.

Questions/Comments:-

Members raised the following questions:-

- ◆ In response to a members query, L Calder explained that in the PTA Best Value Performance Plan, 50 operational service performance targets had been set and only half of these had been achieved or bettered.
- ◆ Concern was expressed about the statement of comparison with other PTAs.
- ◆ A member queried the appropriateness of best value targets which had been set and their usefulness in delivering performance improvement.

- ◆ S Atkinson reminded members that a decision had been taken to review progress on best value review targets and service performance at the PTA policy seminars. Discussions had taken place throughout the year, however the Audit Commission were unaware of the content or debate at policy seminars,
- ◆ S Atkinson explained that the April policy seminar had looked in detail at performance against targets in the previous year and the relevance of the targets set. Targets had been reviewed and new targets around accessibility and links to the LTP had been set. Certain areas where the Authority needed to improve had been highlighted, for example, around equality and diversity and those areas now formed the basis of best value reviews.
- ◆ A member stressed the importance of ensuring that the Audit Commission had all the relevant information. P Woods commented that there were no minutes of the policy seminar and there may need for some more formal performance monitoring with clear audit trails. This was particularly important for purposes of external scrutiny. He added there would be a budget report in January 2005 detailing the setting of the level of the levy for next year and commenting on the overall financial stability of the PTA.

RESOLVED – That

- i) the PTA Annual Audit and Inspector Letter be received.
- ii) the points identified in the covering report and action be noted and the action plan be reported to the next PTA meeting.

46. **SUMMARY OF ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER – NEXUS**

Submitted: A summary of the Annual Audit Letter relating to NEXUS (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That the summary of the Annual Audit Letter for Nexus be received and noted.

47. **REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

Submitted: A report of the Clerk (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the Delegated Committee overseeing a review on the basis that the outcome would be reported back to the Authority for formal approval.

48. **APPOINTMENT OF THE PTA SCRUTINY ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2004/5**

Submitted: A report of the Clerk (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That

- i) the PTA Scrutiny Advisory Committee for 2004/5 be appointed with immediate effect.
- ii) approval be given to reviewing the composition of the Scrutiny Advisory Committee to take account of the restructuring of the Transport Advisory Committees as set out in the “Improving Stakeholder Involvement” report which was agreed by the Authority at its meeting on 26 August 2004. Each of the five local authorities in the Tyne and Wear be invited to nominate 2 members to the Committee with the qualification that:-
 - i) they are not members of the PTA
 - ii) they have had some previous experience of scrutiny in their own local authority.

49. 2004/5 CAPITAL PROGRAMME – SECOND QUARTERLY REVIEW

Submitted: A joint report of the Director of Finance and Administration Nexus and the Deputy Clerk and Treasurer PTA (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That

- i) the revised position on the 2004/5 capital programme be noted and
- ii) the changes as detailed in appendix B to the report circulated on the supplemental agenda be endorsed.

50. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS 2003/4 POST AUDIT

Submitted: Joint report of the Treasurer and Deputy Clerk to the PTA (copy attached to Official Minutes).

In response to a query, S Atkinson confirmed that the increase in fares was significant in the Nexus accounts and was specifically referred to there.

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the publication of the PTA audited annual accounts.

51. PTA/NEXUS BEST VALUE REVIEW: PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Submitted: Report of the Director General (copies attached to Official Minutes).

The Director General gave a detailed presentation of the key issues relating to personal safety and security on public transport and the proposed service improvement plan.

Councillor Green, who lead for the PTA on the Best Value Group, thanked S Atkinson and J Meagher for their hard work during the review.

A member felt that having staff present on routes and at metro stations was absolutely fundamental in terms of the safety of the travelling public. The travelling public felt much more re-assured if they knew there would be staff present at stations as opposed to only having an intercom button.

The Director General explained that it would be impossible to have staff at all 58 metro stations and all trains at all times because of enormous cost implications. He would not say where the Travel Support Officers would propose to operate, as he did not wish to inform the criminal element where staff were operating. The metro system had originally been designed to be unstaffed.

A member stressed that the public needed to know which stations did have a staffing presence. It was particularly important that inter-changes, such as Regent Centre, were staffed particularly as there would be members of the public waiting to catch buses. He accepted it was impossible to have staff at every station. However he felt that there should be clear plans in place which members of the public could easily understand. The Director General said that Nexus was introducing the concept of Interchange Managers which would provide a high profile staff presence at major interchanges including Regent Centre.

In response to a query, the Director General explained that the primary aim of staff at interchanges was to assist people with information and how to use ticket machines.

A member expressed concern about the amount of trackside graffiti which was appearing. He had spoken to the officer responsible for clearing this and although it was cleared on a regular basis, it quickly re-appeared and he referred particular to the area between West Jesmond and Jesmond Station. He suspected this was the work of an individual and queried what methods were used to follow up these offences. The Director General explained that the police did have new measures by use of surveillance camera equipment which allowed them to put the camera in very quickly and this relayed images to a nearby police van. In response to a member's query, S Atkinson explained in relation to street lighting, that a decision still had to be made on a common lighting standard with district councils.

RESOLVED – That

- i) approval be given to the BVR of Personal Safety and Security on Passenger Transport report circulated separately to members.

- ii) approval be given to the service improvement plan attached at Appendix A to the report and Nexus be instructed to commence the actions required.
- iii) it was noted that the commitment to report on the establishment of 3 year targets by March 2005.

52. **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF INFORMATION**

Submitted: A report of the director General (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the Best Value Review of Information and the Service Improvement Plan.

53. **REVIEW TO METRO AND FERRY FARES – 2005**

Submitted: A report of the Director General (copies attached to Official Minutes).

A member commented that whilst simplification of fares was desirable he had some concern about the cost of single fares which could amount to a tax on those single journeys. He felt this was an issue of principle which needed to be looked at carefully.

A member queried whether fares were significantly more expensive than current bus fares. Were there any plans to increase bus fares? The Director General explained that each year over the last 10 years, Metro had actually increased its market share of public transport. The fares policy, developed 10 years ago, determined that metro was a premium product, providing a different, faster and more reliable service than the bus. The Director General then referred to 1996 PTA directive to reduce the operating deficit. As part of the measures implemented at this time fares had been put up beyond the level of inflation. The increases in single tickets, prices and the freezing of return ticket prices meant that there would be less transactions and more use of season tickets which would mean less cash being handled by machines. Relatively few people undertook single journeys and this measure would improve Authority's revenue position.

RESOLVED – That

- i) the fare changes as outlined at Appendix A to the report and sections 4 and 5 to be applied from the 2 January 2005, be approved
- ii) in the event of the Secretary of State approving a £20 penalty fare, Nexus be authorised to introduce this measure as quickly as would be practical.

54. **DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT: EXPERIENCE TO DATE AND THE WAY FORWARD**

Submitted: A report of the Director General (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That

- i) the report be received and noted
- ii) Nexus be instructed to examine the potential role of DRT within the bus and taxi strategy.

55. **BUS SERVICES IN WESTERN GATESHEAD**

Submitted: A report of the Director General (copies attached to Official Minutes).

The actions outlined in paragraphs 3.3.8 (e) had been discussed with Gateshead Councillors and with members of the public.

RESOLVED – That

- i) the current position regarding bus services in Western Gateshead be noted.
- ii) NEXUS actions in pursuing the initiatives set out in paragraph 3.3 be endorsed.

56. **TYNE AND WEAR TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF INAUGURAL MEETING**

Submitted: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Tyne and Wear Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That the information be received and noted.

57. **REGIONAL RAIL STUDY AND REGIONAL PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

Submitted: Report of the Director General (copies attached to Official Minutes)

RESOLVED – That

- i) the content of the report be noted
- ii) the Director General be authorised to respond to the SRA expressing members concerns regarding lack of vision in the regional planning assessment and drawing attention of the SRA to the alternative view as set out in the regional rail study.

58. **DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT COMPLIANCE**

Submitted: A report of the Director General (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

59. **CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR SERVICES 2004**

Submitted: A report of the Director General (copies attached to Official Minutes)

RESOLVED – That the Christmas and New Year Transport arrangements be noted.

60. **UITP WORLD CONGRESS – EXHIBITION**

Submitted: A report of the Clerk (copies attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to attend the 56th UITP World Conference in Rome from 5th – 9th June 2005.

61. **NEW TYNE CROSSING – UPDATE**

Submitted: Report of the Project Director (copies attached to Official Minutes).

P Fenwick gave an update, explaining that he was still waiting to hear how the Department of Transport was to proceed now they had received oral responses. A financial report was to come to the Authority in due course.

RESOLVED – That the following be noted:

- i) the decision of the Secretary of State was still awaited
- ii) progress and procurement action as detailed in the report be noted.

62. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the confidential minutes.