
PART III

Outline Quality Bus Partnership

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Public consultation identified the need of passengers to experience a good level of service for the whole bus journey. Where a single attribute does not meet user expectation, this may have a disproportionate effect on the decision whether or not to use public transport - e.g. where there is a high level of perceived crime this may be a barrier to bus use – despite every other attribute meeting the users expectation.
- 1.1.2 Following the introduction of the 1985 Transport Act, delivery of the bus service product became the responsibility of a number of different agencies. For example local authorities provide the highway infrastructure, while operators provide vehicles and drivers. As a result no single party has control over all elements of the bus service product, which may result in passengers receiving an inconsistent level of service. To overcome this issue, Quality Bus Partnerships (QBP) have been developed to promote integration and cooperation between all parties.
- 1.1.3 The purpose of this paper is to outline the development of a possible Quality Partnership for the Vale of Glamorgan that would underpin the measures contained within the LABS (2004).

2 BACKGROUND POLICY

2.1 Government Policy

- 2.1.1 The Government's Integrated Transport Policy places great emphasis on the potential for improved bus services to make a major contribution towards reducing highway congestion, improving accessibility and reducing social exclusion. Nationally, bus service provision has fragmented following the introduction of the 1985 Transport Act, despite the best efforts of local authorities.
- 2.1.2 Government policy recognises that for the effective development of Local Authority Bus Strategies, the successful implementation of QBPs is required. As Bus Strategies form a core element of Local Transport Plans, the importance of QBPs is further enhanced as a framework to provide quality bus service provision.
- 2.1.3 The White Paper 'Transporting Wales into the Future' (July 1998) states that if buses are to fulfil their potential in an integrated transport system, they must be made more attractive. Significant improvements in bus services have been achieved through co-operation between local authorities and operators through Quality Partnerships in which the local authority provides traffic management measures (including bus lanes and other bus priority measures) to assist the movement of buses, as well as modern, accessible bus stops and station infrastructure. The bus operator offers better quality buses, for example in terms of accessibility and emission standard, as well as improved marketing and more reliable services.
- 2.1.4 The development of QBPs is a key element of Welsh Assembly Government policy, the importance of which is reflected in the requirement that funding bids for bus improvements through Transport Grant must be supported by a Quality Bus Partnership.

2.2 Regional Policy

- 2.2.1 The formation of the South East Wales Transport Board (Sewta) in April 2003 provides greater opportunities to deliver a consistent standard of transport within the ten member authorities. Sewta replaces the SWIFT and TIGER consortia and will be responsible for developing common regional standards based on the existing Regional Public Transport Strategy (RPTS).

3 DEFINITION AND BENEFITS

- 3.1.1 The basis for any Quality Bus Partnership is the identification of a mutual objective. While each member may desire different benefits, these may be achieved through cooperation. For example all partners may share the common objective of increasing bus patronage, the achievement of which will satisfy a bus company's aim of increasing revenue, whilst also fulfilling an authority's target of increasing use of sustainable modes.

- 3.1.2 QBPs provide a framework to achieve such objectives and are defined as:

'Agreements between one or more local authority and one or more bus operators for measures to be taken up by one or more party to enhance bus services, in a defined area, to meet the strategic objectives of the partners.'

- 3.1.3 The development of a Quality Bus Partnership, with defined standards, provides a valuable opportunity to maintain a consistent level of service, which enhances the image of public transport.

- 3.1.4 Potential benefits resulting from the introduction of Quality Bus Partnerships are outlined in the Department for Transport commissioned report 'Quality Bus Partnerships: Good Practice Guide, (TAS 2001). These include:

- Increased patronage;
- Improved communication between partners – resulting in greater cooperation;
- Improved public profile;
- Improved customer satisfaction;
- Improved quality of bus infrastructure; and
- Improved service provision.

- 3.1.5 These benefits will only be achieved if all partners are involved from the inception of such a scheme and are fully committed to implementing the standards agreed. This paper should therefore be considered as a discussion document for development of a Vale of Glamorgan QBP.

- 3.1.6 Public consultation identified the desire of passengers to receive a consistent level of service throughout the whole journey. In view of this requirement the

suggested basis for a Vale QBP is:

'To improve the quality and provision of bus services within the Vale of Glamorgan to facilitate and encourage increased use.'

4 SCHEME MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1.1 As a minimum, a Quality Bus Partnership should consist of at least one local authority and at least one operator, however it is preferable to have as many operators as possible, to provide a consistent level of service.
- 4.1.2 Optional members may also include:
- The Welsh Assembly Government;
 - South East Wales Transport Alliance;
 - Key traffic generators (employers, retail parks);
 - User groups; and
 - The Police.
- 4.1.3 While development of a QBP needs to be undertaken by all partners, one member is required to initiate the process and invite discussion between potential members. In view of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's role in coordinating the provision of bus infrastructure, it is envisaged the Council could take the lead in contacting all partners to assess their interest. Following this initial phase an inception meeting would be required to assess the way forward.

5 SCHEME COVERAGE

- 5.1.1 Whilst it is desirable to implement all improvements overnight, this is not possible due to a number of operational and financial constraints; therefore a phased implementation is advocated. It is proposed that implementation of QBPs will take place in three phases:
- **Phase 1: Strategic SWIFT Direct/Interurban corridors** - the upgrade of these routes could maximise short-term gain by providing benefit to the largest number of passengers. Development of these corridors could reflect regional standards and provide a foundation to develop future schemes.
 - **Phase 2: Interchange Enhancements** - the development of high quality interchanges is essential to promote and provide access to a range of services. The development of QBPs relating to the main interchanges can ensure a high standard of service level provision.
 - **Phase 3 Rural Networks** - whilst the strategic corridors carry the greatest number of passengers, there are a large number of residents in rural locations for whom the bus is their only means of transport. The implementation of quality standards (particularly in terms of improved information, shelters and seating) will improve the experience and increase accessibility for these users.

6 DURATION, MANAGEMENT AND REVIEW

6.1 Duration

- 6.1.1 Under the terms of the Transport Act (2000) the QBP would have a minimum duration of 5 years.

6.2 Management

- 6.2.1 The scheme will cross the boundaries of a range of organisations. To maintain a consistent approach, it is advocated the implementation and administration should be the responsibility of a dedicated council officer who will act as a point of contact to all members.

6.3 Review

- 6.3.1 The success of the QBP will be dependent on all parties committing to the Partnership Agreement, which would need to be self-policing. To ensure the continued smooth operation of the QBP, regular liaison is essential between partners to identify and rectify issues as they arise.
- 6.3.2 To facilitate regular contact it is proposed that all members meet initially on a quarterly basis with an annual review linked to the local authority's Local Transport Plan - Annual Progress Report. The annual review will provide an opportunity to make adjustments in line with emerging changes in priorities.

7 PARTNERSHIP CONTENT

7.1 Scheme of Measures

- 7.1.1 The proposed aim of the QBP is to improve quality across the whole journey. To identify the scope and range of measures required, the bus journey has been analysed in its component parts (refer Figure 7.1).
- 7.1.2 To provide a service level commensurate with the aspirations of the Council, a schedule of measure defining the aspired minimum service level has been produced (refer Figure 7.2). This document also defines which partner(s) are responsible for each element of the strategy.
- 7.1.3 To develop an effective partnership, it is vital to ensure each member is involved in the development process, to identify possible issues and barriers that could prevent the QBP from working. This discussion process is vital to ensure measures agreed are equitable and deliverable.
- 7.1.4 The role of each partner is detailed below.

7.2 All Partners

- 7.2.1 The common perception of public transport is often that of a low quality service, which is only used by a captive market. In order to promote the scheme in the minds of the travelling public, it is vital to raise awareness of the QBP. To achieve

Figure 7.1 - The Public Transport Journey - Identifying the Issues

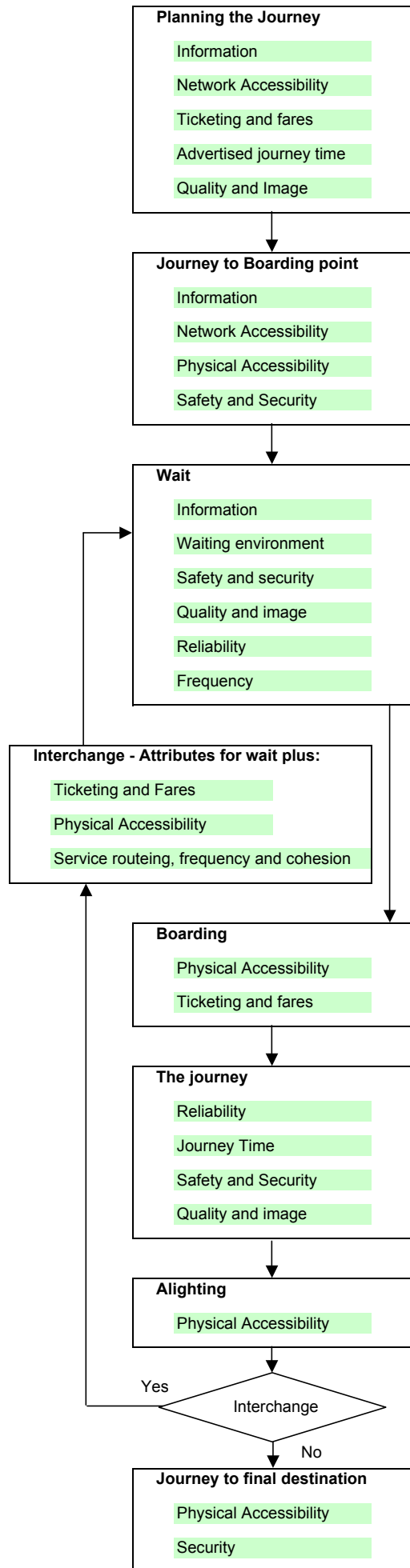


Figure 7.2: Draft Schedule of Measures

Journey Stage	Sub-Heading	Attribute	Standard	Partners responsible
Journey Planning	Information	Telephone enquiry	Traveline Cymru promoted as main telephone enquiry point	All
			Operators to provide telephone contact point for all non timetable related enquiries	Ops
		Printed media	Personal copies of timetables/maps available at agreed distribution points	Ops/VOGC
		At-Stop Information	All stops to contain Sewta standard printed timetable/route info ¹	VOGC/Ops
		Website	Operators to supply timetable information for publication on VOGC site	VOGC/Ops
Waiting Areas	Stop	Stop	All stops to be provided to Sewta Standard	VOGC
		Shelter	Key stops to be fitted with shelters to Sewta Standard	VOGC
		Cleansing	All shelters to be cleansed every 4 weeks	VOGC
	Maintenance	Inspection/Notification	4 Weekly inspection programme, with additional notification procedure from public	VOGC
	Repair	All faults to be rectified within 10 working days of notification	VOGC	
			Stops to be kept free of obstructions/vegetation	VOGC
Journey	The Service	Frequency	Minimum frequency of 2 buses per hour during core hours	Ops
		Reliability	Target of 90% of buses to arrive within 5 mins of published time	Ops
		Hours of operation	Minimum Service provision from 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday	Ops
		Stability	Number of service changes limited to 4 per annum on agreed dates	Ops
	Staff	Training	All drivers to receive customer care/operational training with NVQ option	Ops
		Uniform	All drivers to wear company uniform	Ops
		Feedback	Establish a drivers feedback facility to address quality/service issues	Ops
	Vehicle	Low Floor	All vehicles to be of low floor type on a rolling implementation programme	Ops
		Passenger facilities	Interiors compliant with DDA requirements on a rolling implementation programme	Ops
		Cleansing	Daily Cleansing regime for interior and exterior of vehicles	Ops
Highway	Bus priority schemes	Provision of bus priority schemes at key congestion locations	VOGC	
	Promotion	Corporate Logo	Incorporation of new Sewta logo into stationery, Stop flags and vehicles	All
		Publicity	Regular press releases to be issued to local media	Ops/VOGC
		Advertising	Combined marketing campaign utilising local media	Ops/VOGC
		Launch	Publicity for discount schemes, press campaign	Ops/VOGC
Monitoring	Quality	Patronage	All operators to supply ETM data for patronage monitoring. Target 5% increase/yr	Ops
		Satisfaction	VOGC to undertake annual satisfaction survey. Target 10% increase/yr	CGC
		Reliability	Annual reliability survey to be undertaken at key interchanges	VOGC
Safety and security	Feedback	Continuous Improvement	Establish liaison with passengers groups to address pertinent issues	Ops/NFBU
		Police Liaison	Establish improved police liaison for traffic regulation enforcement & crime reduction	Ops
		Vehicle Communication	Fitment of 2 way radios/mobile phones to all vehicles	Ops

Notes: 1. VOGC to provide printed media, at stop installation undertaken by Operators,

Abbreviations:
VOGC Vale of Glamorgan Council
Ops Operators

this, all stops on the upgraded routes can display the Sewta logo. Pending agreement with operators, it is envisaged each vehicle operating within the terms of the QBP could display a window sticker. This would preferably be removable to provide flexibility for bus operators without diluting the impact of the Partnership on the strategic routes.

- 7.2.2 Information provision is acknowledged as a key requirement of users. Traveline Cymru has been established as the national provider of telephone and web based timetable information. Therefore all partners will need to promote Traveline Cymru as the main source of timetable information.

7.3 Transport Operators

- 7.3.1 Transport Operators can accept responsibility for:

- Provision of a telephone contact number on publicity information to be used for all enquiries, such as lost property, complaints, suggestions etc.
- Provision of printed media (timetables/maps) to be made available at agreed distribution points, in partnership with the Local Authorities. Likely distribution points include; on vehicles, libraries, leisure centres, information kiosks and direct from the bus operators.
- Supplying Traveline with timetable information for publication on their website. The Traveline website is to be promoted as the main source of information on the Internet with optional operator maintained sites.
- Installation, at all stops, of Sewta standard printed timetable information supplied by the Local Authority (allocation of responsibility of stops to be determined).
- Ensuring frequency and delivery of services in line with standards set out within the QBP.
- Number of service changes limited to 4 per annum on agreed dates to help ensure greater network stability and also to limit timetable replacement. (Timetables will need to be updated in accordance with service changes).
- Commitment to achieving a target of 90% of buses to arrive in accordance with the Traffic Commissioner's definition of late running. (no earlier than 1-minute and no later than 5 minutes of the published time).
- Provision of customer care training for all drivers, with the option to attain an NVQ.
- A company uniform to be worn by all drivers.
- Establishing a driver's feedback facility to address quality/service issues.
- Ensuring that all vehicles are compliant with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) legislation by 2017, with a view to earlier provision where possible. Features of the DDA include buses with low floor access and capable of wheelchair use.
- Daily cleansing regime for interior and exterior of vehicles.
- Supply of Electronic Ticket Machine (ETM) data for patronage monitoring on an annual basis..
- 2-way radios/mobile phone available to all vehicles.
- Consultation with passenger groups, at least on an annual basis, to address pertinent issues.
- Continued establishment of improved police liaison for traffic regulation enforcement and crime reduction.
- In conjunction with the Local Authorities, establish regular press releases and

a combined marketing campaign in the local media, and initiate publicity for the launch of discount schemes.

7.4 Local Authority

7.4.1 The Vale of Glamorgan Council accepts responsibility for:

- Improvements to all strategic bus stops to agreed standard, which includes:
 - 180mm high raised boarding platform with tactile paving;
 - Flag sign, giving location, route number(s), telephone enquiry and provision for the display of timetable information;
 - Provision of crossing point with dropped kerbs, adjacent to bus stops (where required);
 - Improved lighting at stop; and
 - Key stops to be provided with a glazed shelter with internal illumination and provision for future installation of RTPi.
- All shelters to be cleansed a minimum of every 4 weeks.
- Provision of a maintenance programme including 4 weekly inspection programme, with additional notification procedure from the public; all faults to be rectified within 10 working days of notification; and all stops to be kept free of obstructions/vegetation.
- Implementation of bus priority schemes at key congestion locations.
- In conjunction with the transport operators, establish regular press releases and a combined marketing campaign utilising the local media, and initiate publicity for the launch of discount schemes.
- Monitoring the operational reliability of Transport Operators through bespoke surveys on an annual basis.
- Undertaking annual satisfaction surveys.
- In partnership with the transport operators, produce a regional guide containing all routes and services and coordinate the provision of personal copies of timetables/maps at agreed distribution points.

7.5 Other Agencies

7.5.1 In addition to the Local Authority and operators, the creation of a QBP provides scope for greater co-operation between other agencies such as the Police for traffic enforcement and users groups to provide feedback. At this stage of the development process no discussions have occurred with these organisations. Therefore this proposal does not include any definition for these groups, as they need to be involved in the initial discussions.

8 PARTNERSHIP TARGETS FOR THE WHOLE JOURNEY EXPERIENCE

8.1.1 A key aim of the Partnership is to promote continuous improvements through the achievement of targets. Monitoring and evaluation is essential to identify the impacts of QBPs to the travelling public and ensure that standards are maintained. Suggested attributes and targets are given below to reflect the key impacts of the introduction of the QBP. The final targets will be agreed following consultation with all partners.

- **Reliability:** Target of 90% of buses to arrive no earlier than 1-minute and no

later than 5-minutes of the published time. Bus services need to be reliable in order to attract people to use them. Reducing the amount of time that a service is behind schedule gives the general public greater confidence in using the network.

- **Satisfaction:** Target of 10% increase per annum. The public also need to be sure that the network is satisfactory in terms of quality in order to use it. Determinants of customer satisfaction include reliability, quality and provision of shelters, information provision, security and accessibility.
- **Patronage:** Target of 5% increase per annum. It is hoped that in the future, increases in reliability and general satisfaction will contribute towards reversing the long-term trend of declining bus patronage.

8.1.2 The collection and analysis of this programme would be coordinated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

8.1.3 Sewta have recently established a monitoring sub-group to consider future monitoring requirements. While it is envisaged their future programme would include Strategic Corridor Monitoring, alternative arrangements may be required, pending their recommendations.

9 THE WAY FORWARD

9.1.1 To develop the QBP concept the following process should be adopted:

- Vale of Glamorgan Council to identify and contact key partners to evaluate their interest in participating.
- Initial discussion meeting to identify scope and outline measures (using this document as a basis).
- Detailed feedback, used to produce final document.
- Allocation of scheme administrator to oversee implementation and administration.
- Public launch.
- Quarterly review during first year.

9.1.2 Following the initial discussion phase, a clear direction and timescale for development will be agreed.