

Coalfield Area Committee

4th March 2010

Report of Director of Strategy, Nexus

Accessible Bus Network Design Consultation (Local bus links)

1. Why has it come to Committee?

This report is provided to the Committee to provide details of the proposals for the Bus Network in the Coalfield area and to request members of the Committee to provide comments and feedback to confirm or improve the proposed design.

2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)

2.1 Area Committee is asked to agree:-

- to cascade the information about public events to organisations and individuals
- to provide comments and feedback on the proposals

3. Background

- 3.1 The Accessible Bus Network Design project was set up in 2009 to design a bus network that better meets the aspirations of local people, in response to the Integrated Transport Authority's new Bus Strategy.
- 3.2 The key changes proposed for the Coalfield area relate to enhancing a number of routes and increasing peak and off-peak services.
- 3.3 The proposals as presented can be achieved within existing resources, by withdrawing a small number of poorly-used early-morning services and Link Up (the Demand Responsive Service) across the district.
- 3.4 The proposals will benefit the residents of the Coalfield area by enabling more people to access key locations both in the daytime and in the evening.

4. Main content of the Accessible Bus Network Design Consultation (Local bus links) report

- 4.1 This report gives a high-level summary of the proposals for the Accessible Bus Network, and explains the process for consulting on the network.
- 4.2 The design involved close liaison between Nexus, council officers and bus operators. It focused on making improvements to the 'non-core' network that was agreed with bus operators in advance. Initial design is now complete, and the output is affordable within Nexus' existing budget for provision of secured services.
- 4.3 The detailed proposals for the network in the Coalfield area are shown in Appendix 1. The main changes are:

New off-peak links

- New hourly evening and Sunday link from Barnwell to Washington Galleries, Sunderland Royal Hospital and Sunderland City Centre (service 2A)
- Frequency of service between Washington Galleries and Doxford International increased to half hourly during the day (service 37)

New peak link

- Frequency of services between Washington Galleries and Doxford International increased to half hourly (service 37)

New and improved Local Services for Houghton and Hetton

- New half hourly daytime service linking Dairy Lane/Burnside Estate/Fence Houses with Houghton and Houghton Health Centre (service H1)
- Improved frequency for daytime service linking Sherriff's Moor and East Rainton with Hetton and Hetton Health Centre (service H2)
- New hourly daytime service linking Low Moorsley with Hetton/Hetton Health Centre and Rainton Bridge Business Park/Houghton/Hall Lane Estate

Re-direction of poorly used resource

- Poorly used early morning/late evening and Sunday journeys on services 35, 38, 71, 77, 968 (Kingsley Coaches) would be withdrawn but the funding and resource used currently to provide this services would be re-allocated to provide many new improved links (described above).
- The Link Up (Demand Responsive Transport) service would be withdrawn, however, the resource would be re-allocated onto 'fixed-route' service provision and utilised within the Sunderland District.

- 4.4 The results of the initial design proposal are affordable within existing budgets. Further enhancements may be possible by working in different ways with the bus operators. Where consultation reveals a need for further growth that cannot be accommodated within existing budgets, additional sources of local funding may need to be explored, the enhancement earmarked for future delivery when funding becomes available, or alternative approaches to delivering bus networks may be examined.
- 4.5 Work is being carried out into branding and marketing the revised network to grow ridership and keep public subsidy to a minimum. Consideration is also being given to an appropriate fare structure for services where Nexus has responsibility for pricing.
- 4.6 Subject to confirmation of resources and procurement processes, it is intended to implement the parts of the revised network that are currently within Nexus's control, in spring 2011.
- 4.7 The revised network will be subject to rigorous consultation and communications processes to ensure that the proposed network achieves the correct balance between public aspirations and available resources. During this process Nexus will consult with all stakeholders, as well as with the general public. The consultation will be managed in line with best practice guidance stated in 'Code of Practice on Consultation' (HM Government, 2008).
- 4.8 The overall consultation process in Sunderland is in two stages:
- Elected Members (February 2010)
 - General Public (15 March – 4 June 2010)

The main public events planned for the Coalfield area are on 15 April, at Hetton Centre from 10.30am – 1.30pm, and on 16 April at Houghton Library from 10am – 12 noon. These will be drop-in events with details of the proposals available and Nexus staff present to discuss them.

In addition, all materials will be made available from 15 March via the Bus Strategy link on the Nexus website (www.nexus.org.uk/busstrategy), as well as printed copies available from local venues and on request from Nexus.

There will be a questionnaire for feedback also available from 15 March or comments can be emailed directly to bus.strategy@nexus.org.uk or posted to Bus Strategy, Strategy Department at Nexus.

Comments and feedback must be received by Nexus no later than 4 June 2010.

- 4.9 Once the consultation is complete, final recommendations will be presented to the Executive Management Team for approval. It is possible that a number of different costed options will be presented: one option will be achievable within current levels of funding, and one or more additional options may require sources of additional funding in order to be deliverable.
- 4.10 There will then be a communication programme with all consultees on the outcomes of the consultation.

5. Background papers

Bus Services in Tyne and Wear: Charter for Growth (ITA/Nexus, 2009)

<http://www.nexus.org.uk/wps/wcm/resources/file/eb21f50c7fe3d56/Bus%20Strategy%20Full%202009.pdf>

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – map of the Coalfield area showing proposed bus routes