

Enterprise and Business Committee
IPT21.

Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport

Evidence from South Wales Chamber of Commerce

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Submission to the Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport

Most efforts to improve public transport provision focus on one of two aims: firstly, to allow people with no other means of transport to reach the facilities and services they need; secondly, to encourage more people to use public transport during peak times in order to reduce congestions, particularly in our larger towns and cities.

The South Wales Chamber of Commerce would urge the Committee to give equal attention to both aims and not to risk the temptation of focusing on one over the other. As well as the social and environmental importance of both aims; it is obviously important to businesses in Wales from an economic point of view that employees are able to get to work efficiently, it is just as important that potential customers are able to access goods and services.

We have surveyed member organisations and their staff in preparing this submission and found clear trends in the responses we received. These trends tend to concern the issues faced by staff travelling to and from work, though many of our recommendations also apply to public transport in a more general sense.

Access to Public Transport

Many respondents to our survey highlighted that, while they were able to use public transport to cover a large part of their journey to work or elsewhere, they quite often had difficulty accessing public transport at either end of their journey. The participants who made these remarks tended to reside in rural areas and therefore did not have a suitable bus or train service near their home. Others, however, mentioned that they worked either at trading estates which were not served by public transport or in out of town areas which were poorly served by public transport.

The South Wales Chamber of Commerce would therefore recommend the following:

- That the Committee, the Welsh Government and all relevant authorities look at the integration of public transport, taking into account the full journey which passengers wish to undertake rather than just looking at how buses and trains can link up with each other more effectively.
- That integration between the car and the public transport network is included in considerations, so that people who cannot access public transport near their home can drive the first part of their journey before joining the public transport network.
- That ways are found to ensure that trading estates and other areas of employment are serviced by public transport.

Direct Routes and Number of Connections

It was clear to us during our survey that people do not like connections. Many participants indicated that the reason why they did not use public transport was that there was no direct connection to their desired destination. Others were willing to make one change, but any more than this was seen as a disincentive. Passengers are not particularly keen on having to wait at bus stops and train stations, especially if they are open to the elements on a cold, wet winter morning.

The South Wales Chamber of Commerce would therefore recommend the following:

- That the Committee examines the number of connections to places of work and other popular destinations, looking at how more direct routes can be provided.
- That Local Authorities and other organisations which provide bus shelters ensure that passengers are suitably protected from the elements on a cold and wet day.
- That passengers using train and bus stations have suitable places to wait for connecting services, so that they are able to wait in comfort for any duration of time and are protected from the weather if it is cold and raining.

Journey Times

It is important to both employees and customers that they are able to travel to and from their chosen destinations quickly. One of the reasons which some people responding to our survey gave for using public transport was that it was in some situations quicker than travelling by car. However, a larger number gave the length of journey time as a reason for not using public transport. This particularly highlights the importance of effective public transport integration, as the time which passengers spend waiting for a connecting service adds to the total duration of their journey. Also, the risk of missing a connection, the thought of having to spend a long time waiting for another connection and the possibility of being left stranded are deterrents for many people.

The South Wales Chamber of Commerce would therefore recommend the following:

- That the Committee works with public transport providers to find ways of reducing the waiting times between connections.
- That the Committee works with public transport providers to find ways of ensuring that public transport services run to schedule in order to reduce the chances of missed connections.
- That a standard and well-advertised service is set up for passengers who miss a connection, enabling them to find alternative routes while on the go. This could involve enhancing Traveline Cymru's current service and would need to take into account people who have no immediate access to the Internet or a telephone as well as those who do.

Replacement Services

When a bus or train service is unable to run, it is important for those reliant on public transport to have other means to reach their destination. If passengers are forced to miss appointments or arrive home later than planned because of a heavily delayed or cancelled service, they will become increasingly reluctant to use public transport.

The South Wales Chamber of Commerce would therefore recommend the following:

- That information on pre-existing alternative services is readily available to passengers whose normal service is delayed or cancelled.
- That, if no bus or train services are operating at all on a particular line, a mechanism for organising a replacement service swiftly is in place.

Timing of Services

Some respondents to our survey raised the problem that the scheduling of their public transport service did not often allow them to arrive at work and leave work at suitable times. This was particularly the case with staff working non-regular hours (i.e. not working 9-5). However, the more common complaint from participants was that, as the public transport schedule did not correspond

with their working day, they were required to arrive before their start time and leave after their end time, thereby adding time to their working day. In some circumstances, this additional time was quite substantial.

The South Wales Chamber of Commerce would therefore recommend the following:

- That a mapping exercise takes place to highlight pockets of relatively high employment and that work is carried out to link people working in these areas with public transport providers in order to ensure that services match the needs of workers.

Connection to the Airport

Many participants raised the issue of public transport connections between Cardiff Airport and our three main cities, particularly for incoming passengers who do not have access to a car. Many feel that the current journey times are too long and that the service is not frequent enough and can involve too many connections. They also believe that the quality of appearance of the buses and trains does not provide an adequate initial impression of Wales to incoming passengers. Suggestions for improvement include more direct “shuttle” routes, more frequent routes and a service designed to welcome people to Wales.

Public Transport and Deliveries

Our survey also asked businesses about their deliveries. Most businesses, particularly the smaller businesses which make up the vast majority of businesses in Wales, get their deliveries by road. Owing to their size, and therefore to the size of their deliveries and their scattered positioning, it is virtually impossible for them to get deliveries in any other way.

Many businesses raised the issue of congestion as a problem when it came to deliveries. Reducing congestion by a modal shift of people on to public transport would have a beneficiary effect on businesses receiving deliveries on time.

While not specifically relating to the integration of public transport, many businesses brought up the issue of the need for better integration between rail and road hubs. This would allow some deliveries to be transported by rail for at least part of their journey.

Conclusion

Travelling is a very personal activity. Very few people undertake the same journey at exactly the same time. This is not a problem if everyone is able to travel in their own vehicle, but it does cause difficulties in creating a modal shift to a mass transit transport system.

In practice, this means that the problems which passengers using public transport face are personal to them and will vary substantially from person to person and situation to situation. Our survey raised a lot of issues, and we have concentrated on the most common ones in our submission as we believe that focusing on these will help improve the integration of public transport.

However, we would urge the Committee and others working towards creating a modal shift to public transport to remember that it only takes one obstacle to make a journey by public transport impossible. We would therefore conclude this submission by urging the Committee to focus on integrating transport as a whole rather than just integrating public transport.

