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Sian Phipps
Enterprise and Business Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

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Dear Sian

THE ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY INTO INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Thank you for inviting Arriva Trains Wales to provide evidence in support of the Committee's inquiry into integrated transport within Wales. I hope that the commentary below will prove useful in advance of the Committee meeting on 16 January.

Arriva Trains Wales operates the Wales & Borders passenger trains franchise which is approaching the end of the tenth year of a fifteen year franchise term. We operate in the region of 950 trains daily and, since October 2003, we have invested over £32M in the franchise compared to the stated contractual obligation of £400K. There are no specific contractual obligations for us to provide specific infrastructure or facilities in connection with integrated services apart from an obligation to work with local bus operators on through ticketing schemes. We have, however, worked positively with the Regional Consortia in Wales in support of their strategies, Regional Transport Plans and policies and we have also co-operated with other transport operators to expand through ticketing.

Definition of Integrated Public Transport

There appears to be no common standard on a definition on exactly what integrated transport means to both the provider and the consumer. This may indicate that the best examples/models of integrated transport systems operating elsewhere are bespoke and potentially unlikely to provide a complete solution if imported to another environment or country. We should therefore ensure that proper research is undertaken to determine the best solutions according to need and sufficiency.

The concept of integration should be seen from the consumer's perspective and, in determining a strategy or policy, Government should understand the true necessity, demand and the motivation of a consumer to use public transport for whatever purpose. For integrated transport to compete with the car for example, the whole journey, by whatever number of connectional modes, must have a convenient and seamless profile which incorporates the customer's expectations of high quality accommodation, dependability (particularly for connections at nodal points), comparable speed and affordability. For Government, it is extremely important that any decisions to implement systems or networks take account that they are economically sustainable when delivered, and capable of sustainable expansion in the future.

Vision, Strategy and Policy

It is our view that these have to be determined and led by Government so that at all authorities and agencies are clear on direction, the latter will support development of these through appropriate input and expertise. The development of a vision will have to consider the degree of importance to which integration should be accorded and whether it will constitute 'gold-plated' solutions or making best use of existing resources. It should also consider end-to-end journeys which are not only made in Wales but from other destinations within the United Kingdom as a whole and the positive impacts these might have on the Welsh economy.

Strategy and policies on integration must incorporate flexibility and reflect:

- Existing and future customer need, demand and expectations.
- The data produced by intelligent means on which need and demand is actually determined. Pre-existing perceptions should not play a part in any process or assessment but the integrity and accuracy of the data must be assured.
- Transport services which are predicated on value for money and the efficacy of a co-ordinated and reliable system.
- Ensuring the attractiveness of a system to the customer through consistent delivery of quality, reliability, convenience, personal security and affordability; and a separate communications strategy that will seek to change mind-sets and perceptions of public transport.
- Population densities and forecasts of growth.
- The process and method of co-ordinating transport providers.
- Competition and the commercial nature of transport operators.
- Concessionary fares.
- Environmental issues and legislation.
- The interfacing of retailing and ticketing systems which are flexible and future-proof which incorporate a robust revenue allocation function. A separate revenue protection strategy would also be required.
- The need for additional infrastructure.
- Issues of accessibility to all modes and interchanges.
- The need for additional revenue funding to ensure sustainability.
- Land Use Policy.
- Standards required in the provision of customer service, information sources and communications.
- Challenging the experts' theories.

Existing Public Transport Services Provision

Use of, and dependency on, public transport is determined by a number of obvious factors, in the main the reliability of the services on offer, cost and convenience. In South Wales for example, particularly around Cardiff and Newport, the population density has essentially dictated the range and quality of services on offer and the journey opportunities presented through ease of connections at hub or nodal points. In less populated areas, unsurprisingly, the level of service will be reflectively less and more car-dependent.

Criticism over the complexity of rail fares has been a recurring theme, however the range of advance purchase products offered by Train Operating Companies has created more affordable options for the consumer with the simultaneous benefit of managing capacity on the network. It has undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of rail along with its achievements in operating punctuality in recent years. Whether the rail journey is made from a rural area or urban area, the choice and affordability for long distance journeys exists provided there is ease of access to the rail network. In contrast, on some parts of our network, rail fares are in fact lower than bus fares. Given the current cost of fuel, the choice is therefore clear, particularly for the commuter.

For the services on offer, there are excellent sources of web-based, and other, customer information available to allow informed choices to be made by the consumer. For example, the National Rail Enquiries service provides advance and real-time information in a variety of formats and also carries comprehensive information on accessibility to the rail network for disabled customers. On the latter, each Train Operating Company will have determined and published its own bespoke arrangements but the availability of this information is a positive contribution to the growth in disabled customers using trains and heightened their confidence in the rail network. Physical access to stations and trains however still presents a challenge at a large number of locations on our network and we would welcome Welsh Government's view on how full accessibility can be achieved.

Occasionally, there will be out of course situations which result in train services being significantly delayed or interrupted. The rail industry as a whole has worked extremely hard in recent times to develop robust systems to enhance the communication of real-time information to customers through the 'Passenger Information During Disruption' initiative, this process is subject to continuous improvement but already delivering quality and reliable information. For integration of transport services, a major challenge will be the provision of similar and accurate real time information for whichever mode of connecting service is affected and what contingencies might exist between the operators which are involved in a customer's particular journey.

Key Issues To Consider For Improving Public Transport Integration

Our own experience suggests that there are some examples of reasonable integration in Wales but that these are limited to improving access to trains, for example through expanding car parking and cycling facilities at stations. This does not follow any particular strategy or policy on integration, rather they appear to be separate policies or projects on those subjects alone.

We have worked hard to pursue and create additional through ticketing opportunities to facilitate the links between buses and trains (notwithstanding the existence of Plus Bus which has been in place for many years) but this is predominantly as a result of tourism initiatives and partnership working with key stakeholders. On a number of occasions, the desire to retail a product which involves multi-modal means has been compromised by applicable law and the difficulties of establishing mechanisms for fair apportionment of revenue to each operator. Retailing in the rail industry is highly complex and future methods of ticketing which are intended to enable more integration will need to be thoroughly thought through.

Walking and cycling feature in a number of UK regions' public transport strategies and are regarded as important elements in public transport solutions. These should also feature in any future public integration strategy for Wales and/or its regions.

The commercial nature of transport operators is an important feature to consider in that connectivity between operators might often result in additional operating costs and this can be an impediment between bus and train for example. This could be solved by providing operators with appropriate subsidies to ensure that journey opportunities are realised for actual customer demand and for good reason.

I trust that the above proves a useful contribution to the Committee and its inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Vaughan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Vaughan
Head of Franchise & Stakeholder Management