

Mr Richard Edwards AM  
Chair of the Environment, Planning and  
Transport Committee  
The National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
**CARDIFF**  
**CF99 1NA**



10<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Our reference: 652/03

Dear Mr Edwards

## **POLICY REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN WALES**

The Rail Passengers Committee Wales is pleased to be able to respond to your Committee's consultation document looking at public transport in Wales.

We have used chapter 7 which summarises your recommendations and chapter 8 for the basis of our reply, looking at the suitability of existing organisational structures and the options for changes in organisations as out forward by your Committee.

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee fully supports the list of recommendations, especially those where the views of 'real' passengers are concerned. In general terms the list of recommendations covers a broad area, though we would like to comment on some recurring themes.

Innovative ticketing schemes are needed, allowing full interchangeability between bus and train and inter-operator, by the development and encouragement of imaginative schemes for the universal use of Smart Card. Through ticketing needs to be extended, and bus operators needed to be encouraged to work with train operators to introduce such arrangements. The Committee would go so far as to suggest that those operators who do not co-operate or support initiatives such as the All-Wales Flexi-Pass should not normally be given any public funding.

Improving access on public transport for those with young children, and the elderly needs to be looked at, and bus and rail service provision on Sundays and Bank Holidays requires

attention. Long distance coach services should be planned to complement – not to compete with – rail services.

#### EXISTING ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES:

- *The suitability or otherwise of existing number of regional consortia to deliver improved integrated public transport services*

In the short-term, the existing consortia are very suitable for delivering improved integrated public transport services. They are small enough to have and use local knowledge, yet large enough to deliver improvements that do not vary as one crosses each authority's boundary. The existing consortia are positive and forward thinking in their efforts to develop public transport strategies.

In the medium to long term, they need to grow larger, possibly through mergers or joint working arrangements, so that a consistent product is delivered to passengers, wherever they start, finish or break their journey.

Some of the existing regional consortia do consider the cross border implications for public transport. This needs to be extended, with local authorities in say South East Wales looking at liaison with authorities in Hereford and Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire.

There might also be a strong case for developing a pool of staff with relevant skills to service the consortia, bearing in mind your statement on page 23 that: "none of the current consortia have their own separate existence or support staff."

#### OPTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

- *Establishing a Passenger Transport Authority (PTA) for Wales. This could be within the National Assembly or a separate Assembly sponsored body (ASB). Its regional structure could be divisions of the National Assembly or ASB. Alternatively, it could work through a consortia of local authorities;*

The Committee is not wholly sold on this idea. As the report points out, there are different problems, requiring different solutions, in rural Wales compared to urban Wales. A PTA is good at integrating bus and rail services, but these are less likely to occur in rural areas. Here, shared cars, community transport, taxis may be a better solution and a PTA will only add additional bureaucracy to this process. However, with the setting up of a Wales and Borders rail franchise, there is an alternative view that the setting up of a Wales PTA would be beneficial.

- *Establishing a PTA/PTE (Passenger Transport Executive) for the ten South East Wales local authorities on the existing model.*

We are fully in favour of this. The density of population, coupled with use of cars where public transport is a genuine alternative, produces an environment where a PTA/PTE could bring about a significant modal shift.

- *Developing existing arrangements with the National Assembly building on its Transport Framework and using its funding and other powers under the Transport Act 2000 to provide leadership. Local authorities, possibly organising themselves on a statutory basis, particularly in South East Wales, would work in partnership with the National Assembly to deliver specific targets.*

We consider this to be an inferior solution to the PTA/PTE for South East Wales. However, I think it is an attractive proposal for the rest of the country and worthy of support.

- *Other innovative solutions.*

One solution is to make the Wales & Borders franchisee responsible for ensuring bus services integrates with rail as far as possible. Railtrack should be made responsible for working with local authorities on the development of high quality rail/bus interchanges.

- *Additional powers of direction would be sought on the Scottish model for rail and the possibility of delegated responsibility for Valley Lines would be pursued in all cases.*

This is to be supported and welcomed.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Youngman**  
**Deputy Secretary**