

Stagecoach

Presented by: Chris Hilditch Managing Director Stage Coach Devon County Council

Background

Stagecoach has an extensive bus network operating throughout Devon. Involving over 260 buses (increasing over the summer period) and employing over 744 staff.

Key Issues Highlighted: -

1. Public Funding

Currently public funding favours the car; over three times more funding is spent on roads than on public transport.

2. Company Profits

Currently there is limited profit in the bus industry. Financially in Devon Stagecoach relies upon the summer season. Many routes in Devon run at a loss- these are supported by the profits from the more profitable routes (E.g. Route 12) and in some cases subsidy funding from the County Council.

3. Road Availability

In Exeter the combination of narrow, congested roads and an expanding city results in the unsustainable reduction in road space. Stagecoach are keen to work with the County Council on its Bus Strategy.

4. Concessionary Fares

Currently 25% of passenger journeys are accounted for by concessionary fares, generating 8% of Stagecoaches revenue. The emerging generation of pensioners are however less familiar with using public transport and are therefore retaining their cars for longer.

5. Parking

Current Council policy permits constructing car parks in City Centre, this contradicts other policies which try to reduce congestion in town centres. This highlighting the need for joined up thinking.

Recommendations for the Next DLTP (2006-2011)

1. Funding

A fairer distribution of public funding within transport is required. A greater amount should be spent on buses reflecting the DLTPs' modal hierarchy.

2. Stronger Methods

In order for public transport to remain viable, increased pressure is needed upon motorists. Current soft options are not achieving the desired results and the potential of public transport is not being realised.

3. Greater Joined Up thinking

Greater joined up thinking is required on issues such as road capacity / availability, public transport provision, public funding and social inclusion.

4. Policy

Policy decisions must no longer be taken in isolation and they must take into account the underlying relationship with other areas.

5. Parking

- Vital that there is a joined up strategy on parking in Exeter City.
- Current Council policy on constructing car parks in the city centre generates more traffic and results in greater congestion.

6. Rural Bus Routes

In order for certain bus routes to remain profitable there is a need to restructure concessionary fares.

DEVON LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – 2006-2011

Panel Discussion: -

- New Town Development

The less dense the housing the greater the expense to provide bus routes. Traditional housing estates are most profitable (with high-density housing and conventionally populated with those who fit the bus user profile E.G Young mothers and pensioners). Other development that suites the Bus Company includes modern style terrace as more passengers can be accessed using a smaller resource. Ribbon development close to existing main bus routes would also offer the most profitable routes.

- It is recommended that the new town bus routes are established as early as possible. In order to promote behaviour encouraging the use of buses from the offset.
- Possible future improvements to bus transport includes bus only roads. Possible routes this would be of greatest value – include Cowic St, Ex bridges and Countess Wear.
- Due to legal restrictions, co-operation between bus companies in Devon has prevented establishing through ticketing. Within the company there are however day tickets and weekly tickets available which offer good value.
- Encourage car users on the benefits of park and ride (Hearts and Minds Campaign).