

Tunbridge Wells Public Transport Forum
Town Hall, Committee Room A
16 May 2007 – 6pm

Minutes

In attendance:

Cllr Peter Davies (Deputy Leader of TWBC/Councillor and Portfolio holder) Chairman
Norman Kemp (Nu-Venture)
James Cook (KCC)
Richard Powell (TWBC)
Gary Stevenson (TWBC)
Martin Lewis (TW Rail Travellers Association)
Nichola Reay (Clerk, PW Town Council)
John Goodfellow (Town Forum)
John Spurling (TWBC)
Michael Coggles (TW Access Group)
Nick Green (TWBC)
Nigel Jarrett (South Eastern Railway – pp Mike Gibson)
Malcolm Spalding (Arriva)
Eric Baldock (Autocar)
Richard Phillips (Sandhurst PC)
Alaster Tod (RTW Civic Society)
Lorna Blackmore (Soroptimists)
Mike Clegg (RTW Civic Society)
Sue Little (minutes)

Members of Public in attendance:

Andrew Lohmann
Maurice Knight (observing for STC)

Apologies received from:

Lene Beynon (TWBC)
Kieran Healy (Network Rail)
June Bridgeman (SITWD)
Mike Gibson (South Eastern Railway)
Roger Manning (KCC)

Agenda Item	Details	Action By
1.0	Introduction of New members The Chairman commenced the meeting with information on the fire procedure and introductions from all present.	
2.0	Minutes of the previous meeting and Matters arising The draft minutes were discussed and agreed.	
	3.0 Links to new hospital has been added as a separate agenda item This item is on the agenda (item 5.0)	
	5.0 Quality Bus Partnership – congestion issues The Joint Transport Board are concerned about congestion on the A26. The JTB requested that some bus lanes be removed but the Kent County Highways Advisory Board did not support this request. The JTB Board would use their best efforts to assist the County Council in achieving the 2010 targets of reducing congestion by 10%, improving air quality and removing unnecessary short lengths of bus lanes will continue with its aims to improve air quality, remove short length bus lanes and reduce congestion by 2010. James Cook confirmed that a review is currently being undertaken by KCC which will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· The use of bus lanes by taxis· Peak time only use of bus lanes	

- HGV use of bus lanes
- JC to update the forum members at the next meeting
 JC updated the group on the school bus scheme (Kent Freedom Pass Scheme):
- One off fee of £50 per annum.
 - Applications can be made at participating schools
 - The scheme starts on 4 June 2007.
 - Not all operators have come to agreements on this scheme and discussions with those continue.
 - Applications for passes are being received (approx 50 per day at the moment).

11.0 Limited access for buses in High Brooms due to planning Restrictions

PD

PD had no further information available to offer the group and requested that this be carried over to the next meeting for Action.

3.0 Public consultation on the proposed 2009 rail timetable

Martin Lewis expressed concerns that the proposed timetable is being produced and issued for comments without prior public consultation. He requested to know where South Eastern Railways are at with this. Nigel Jarrett was unable to update the group with information on this but agreed to make further enquiries and email any information available to Sue Little. (Information received will be added as a footnote to the minutes for distribution to the group.) It was also agreed to carry this item over to the next meeting agenda.

NJ

3.0 Enforcement of bus lanes

James Cook advised that KCC are to prepare a paper on this issue but this will not be until November or early 2008.

It was agreed that it would be difficult to distinguish between taxis and other private vehicles if they were allowed to use bus lanes making it more difficult to Police.

The potential solution would be to use an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system.

4.0 Bus time tables/signage

Improved signage at bus stops

The shopper hopper signage has been improved and is now more prominent. There is a programme in progress to update bus shelters signage.

Michael Coggles requested that Arriva consider using audio systems at bus stops for visually impaired passengers and reminded them of their duty to ensure that all future contracts provide independent access. Service timetables being available in any format including audio would improve the numbers that use the services.

NG emphasized the need for service providers to be aware of their obligations to provide these services. James Cook advised that they are currently reviewing the real time system. The Dept. of Transport guidance is to head toward providing a full service and there may be funding available for sophisticated systems in the future. Under the transport Act 2000 KCC must produce a strategy for providing information on services, but it is not mandatory to provide any particular services.

This strategy was reviewed last year and an action plan was drawn up which includes:

- Improving services from TW to Pembury and TW to Tonbridge.
- Reviewing displayed information (local area maps etc)
- Commence producing chronological departure lists (this will take a long time to roll out).

Coordination of bus timetables

Malcolm Spalding advised the group that commercial operators couldn't try to co-ordinate bus services, as it is illegal from a competition perspective. Primarily a bus operator wishes to get customers on their buses and co-ordinating issues do become secondary issues. They have the right to be competitive but can be encouraged to work together.

PD recognised the benefits of competition but would be keen to see integrated services. Nigel Jarrett pointed out that there are Bus/train services that link wherever possible.

The 'Plus Bus' scheme is starting in Ramsgate and is being rolled out to include TW and Tonbridge. Passengers can buy rail tickets that include travel on buses in the town of their destination. The scheme commences on Sunday 20 May 2007 and initially covers 23 stations with the intention of rolling it out further in the future.

5.0 **Viability of new bus services (new hospital)**

Richard Powell confirmed that the Pembury hospital project is going ahead and requested views from the transport companies on public transport issues.

It was noted that the planning application for the hospital did include a transport plan and funding to improve public access and services.

PD emphasised the need for decisions to be made sooner rather than later as during the construction phase of the new hospital there will be reduced parking facilities for staff and visitors.

Richard Powell advised the group that although there is currently no commitment to a park and ride scheme in TW it always remained a possibility for discussion. He added that if North Farm were used as the car park for such a scheme, then it could potentially have bus services in two directions – into town and to Pembury hospital.

Pembury to Paddock Wood

The number 6 runs hourly between Pembury and Paddock Wood

Link to Maidstone hospital

Linking Pembury hospital with Maidstone hospital by public transport is under discussion. Michael Coggles highlighted the need for this to be accessible transport and suggested that consideration be given to a 'Fastrack service'. It was agreed that all possible options will need to be discussed.

John Goodfellow is meeting with the NHS Trust tomorrow and will stress the need for a travel plan for transport to the new hospital. Michael Coggles requested that at this meeting he also request a written confirmation that any transport provisions will be accessible for disabled persons.

Arriva are holding discussions with Maidstone NHS Trust and investigating service level requirements with regard to extending services to Maidstone hospital. Currently services from Tunbridge Wells run 3 times per hour and end at the Fountain in Maidstone. Passengers have to cross a busy road for a connecting service. It is appreciated that this is not ideal and Malcolm Spalding agreed to look at this service.

MS

Investigations on the service level required are underway and Malcolm Spalding agreed to update the group on the outcome of this.

It was agreed that dial-a-ride services (supplied by Compaid in TW) are expensive and KCC will investigate the uses of voluntary car services. Michael Coggles suggested that if there were a fleet of taxis that complied for access/disability, they could be used for services to and from hospitals.

It was agreed that there is a need to include transport to Maidstone hospital in the discussions. LB will request that a representative of SWKPCT attend the next meeting. Norman Kemp suggested that Simon Johns from Maidstone PCT be invited to attend.

LB

6.0 **Network Rail project list**

Proposed DDA improvements to stations in TW borough & neighbouring areas

It was unfortunate that Kieran was unable to attend this meeting. It was agreed that this would be carried over to the next agenda, but in the meantime, LB will ask him for a copy of the programme of work, to circulate to the group.

LB

Nigel Jarrett is not familiar with the complete programme but could confirm that a number of general improvements have been agreed including the painting for the footbridge and the replacement of paving (already carried out).

A further discussion on disabled access to stations is required. Justin Ryan (Accessibility Manager for South East Rail) is investigating available funding streams.

Linking town centre improvements to TW railway station

Richard Powell informed the group of TWBC plans to improve the environment around the area of TW railway station. Kieran Healy has agreed to meet with TWBC with a view to incorporating the station improvements within the whole plan, although there are no definite plans as yet.

Car parking at railway stations

This item was not discussed and will be added to a future agenda.

7.0 Future Agenda items

Next Agenda:

- Public consultation on the proposed 2009 rail timetable.
- DDA compliance issues at High Brooms Railway station.
- Car parking at railway stations.

8.0 AOB

JC agreed to investigate and report back to the next meeting on the proposed timetable deadline for making buses fully accessible. The deadline for all buses is 2016. JC

John Goodfellow highlighted issues with the bus stops at Meadow Road, including the lack of timetable information, lack of shelters. It is the responsibility of TWBC to provide shelters and LB has investigated this issue. GS will ask LB to contact JG directly on this issue to discuss her findings. Michael Coggles added that the Disability Access group have investigated this area and were in agreement that the pathway is too narrow. It is unfortunate that so many buses meet at this central point in the town. GS/LB

Proposals are being developed to extend the car park charges and patrolling to Sundays. PD explained that he felt that the charges reflected changes in social practices and that the extra revenue would pay for improved parking attendant services. Richard Powell pointed out that town centre retailers are doing 13% of their business on a Sunday. This trade is not new trade but trade that has transferred from other days of the week.

There are currently only limited public transport services on a Sunday in the Tunbridge Wells area and Malcolm Spalding explained that there are currently no extra services that would be sustainable. This can be reviewed if there is a perception that there is sufficient need and sufficient volume of passengers.

South Eastern Trains has recently increased Sunday services.

Next Meeting Date:

Wednesday 19 September, at the Town Hall at 6pm

Future Dates for your diaries:
Wednesday 16 January 2008

*If there is a need for an interim meeting, you will receive a notification.