



time for change?

## Bus strategy consultation responses

Reference and date	Response
<p><b>Ref PIP065</b> 28 May 2014</p>	<p>I refer here to a letter from yourself to [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] Wallridge Drive, Holywell, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 ONN on 31 March 2014, which was shown to me in my surgery in Holywell on the second Saturday in April not so long ago. In it [REDACTED] was pursuing options to try and get a better access for the people of Holywell to the number 57/57A bus, especially during all weekdays and weekends. Now I fully understand the financial constraints you are under in subsidising buses anymore than what you are already doing, and I thank you for the financial support that Nexus contributes to this bus service every evening so that the residents of Holywell do have some services during that time of day.</p> <p>I have tried in the past to interest Arriva in giving us a better service both with the 57/57A and the X4; they could easily have given us a better service with both these two buses with very little journey adjustments and little or no outlay to themselves, but they have steadfastly refused to do so, preferring to protect their profits on these journeys down to what must only amount to small change. This attitude of Arriva's annoys me and I want to see further of what might be done in the future to redress their recalcitrant attitude.</p> <p>As I understand it Nexus and the PTA are wanting to take over the buses of the Tyne and Wear conurbation and offer bus companies like Arriva and Stagecoach, etc. quality contracts to operate the buses where it is Nexus and the PTA who set the routes and the fares. I am in favour of this and think it is high time that the buses were taken out of the bus companies' hands so that we, the travelling public, got a much better service. Now when that time comes can we please have the 57/57A and X4 put onto the Quality Contracts list on the grounds that all three of these buses start their journeys in Tyne and Wear and end in Northumberland or start their journeys in Northumberland and end in Tyne and Wear?</p> <p>Can you please advise me whether or not the above bus services can be added onto the Quality Contracts scheme when it comes in, and how long is it before the take-over of the buses by Nexus and the PTA can be expected to come into force?</p> <p>Yours sincerely, [REDACTED]</p> <p>Councillor Bobby Nixon, Seaton Valley Community Council.</p>



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<b>Ref PIP066</b> 30 May 2014	<p><b>TYNE AND WEAR INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY'S QUALITY CONTRACTS CONSULTATION</b></p> <p><b>Response from the Sunderland 50+ Forum and Sunderland Older People Champion Network: November 2013</b></p> <p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>The Sunderland 50+ Forum exists to ensure the voice of older people is heard in the City and that they can be part of influencing and setting the agenda on what is important in their lives. There are 5 local forums in each of the 5 local areas of Sunderland and they discuss and take forward issues that are important to their local area. There is also a Sunderland Older People Champion Network which is made up of older people who want to discuss and influence Citywide agendas.</p> <p>Transport is a major issue for older people in Sunderland and the Forum members and Champions asked for a meeting to be organised to discuss the Quality Contracts Scheme consultation and feed in their views. There were 23 members and champions in attendance at the meeting. Claire Tully, Nexus and David Marshall, Transport Policy Officer, Sunderland City Council were also in attendance with Elaine Jones, 50+ Forum Coordinator and Kasia Kurowska, Partnership Manager from Age UK Sunderland.</p> <p>It should be noted that there were no representatives from the bus companies at the meeting. Therefore, the comments and recommendations below are based on the information and views of the older people that came to share their experience and views.</p>



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<b>Ref PIP066</b> 30 May 2014	<p>Key discussion points and messages from the Sunderland Older People Representatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Service Continuation: There was concern that the bus companies may stop services if the scheme was to go ahead and this would be a major problem for all bus customers.</li><li>2. Profits must go to local areas and non-profit routes need to be considered: The group agreed that in any new system the profits made through bus routes should be used to enhance services and structures within the local area. Especially when the profits have come from public funding investment within the service. The group emphasised the need to ensure the social and wider economic benefits of routes are considered. Public transport is vital to many older people to allow them to stay physically and socially active.</li></ol> <p>Members from North Sunderland highlighted that there are no buses through Dame Dorothy Road and the Coast Road apart from to the University. However, there are large residential areas and older people living in the area who are not serviced at all by a route. This was given as an example of one area where a non-profit but socially valuable bus route should be developed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Control over fares: The group commented on the rise of fares without any noticeable improvements to the service. This should be considered with any new system and there should be clear links between fare increases and infrastructure improvements.</li></ol>



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<b>Ref PIP066</b> 30 May 2014	<p>4. There is a need for a more robust and effective complaints procedure: A number of members gave examples of how they had complained about an issue to do with the bus service in a local area and either nothing had been done about it or they never received any feedback.</p> <p>An example was given where a bus route had been changed due to road works and a bus stop had been changed without clear information being provided of the changes. When a formal complaint was reported both the Council and bus company would not take responsibility for the complaint and blamed the other for the fault. Another example given was when a bus route changed its name without any warning and this led to confusion for service users.</p> <p>The group agreed that any new system needs a robust and transparent complaint procedure so that those customers who encounter poor service can be responded to quickly and effectively.</p> <p>5. Improving Accessibility: Branding, Signage and Seating: Although it is outside of this consultation the group also commented on the accessibility of the service and were keen to see how any new scheme would be more responsive to customers' needs. The group thought that the branding and marketing of buses often makes it difficult for some people to navigate the system. One member noted that it was easier when the colour of the bus would identify which service it was. The bus signs are often too small and this creates problems for older people with visual impairments and many other people who suffer from visual or cognitive impairments, regardless of age. Although it is important to ensure room for prams and wheelchairs the group also agreed that older people with other mobility aids need to be considered in this group and where possible pushchairs folded to allow for room when there is limited space. The group also commented that some modern pushchairs far exceeded the space given and in this instances, created major problems with customers accessing the rear seats.</p>



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<b>Ref PIP066</b> 30 May 2014	<p>Although the group understand that these issues are outside the remit of the consultation they are critical factors to the quality of service for all customers and not just older people. Any new governance system needs to consider how it engages and involves members of the public and interest groups in the design and development of the bus service to ensure equal access for all.</p> <p>6. Concessionary travel: Although the older persons bus pass is outside the remit of this consultation the group were keen to emphasise the importance of the bus pass for older people. The eligibility of the pass was raised both for the age at which someone can access the pass and also the difference in rules between local areas. In Durham the pass can be used before 9.30am but not in Sunderland. This is seen as unfair by many older people in Sunderland. The consultation literature highlights proposals to support younger people accessing the service and this is very important. There should also be provisions made for those older people who rely on the bus service for independence and maintaining their daily lives.</p> <p>7. Need for transparency and efficiency in any new system: The group agreed that any new system needs to ensure it does not become too bureaucratic and must have strict targets and outcomes. This will ensure efficiency and allow the costs to be monitored. There should also be clear checks and limits to spend so that public funding is primarily directed towards investment in the service infrastructure.</p> <p>8. Lay member of Board – not just politicians: The group agreed that there was a need to ensure that any new governance structure was not just made up of politicians and that there were real opportunities for members of the public and service users to contribute and guide the development of future bus services as well. It was suggested that these 'lay' members should be selected from representative groups so that there was some mandate connected with their position but that this should be from groups outside of the political arena. It was felt that this would build further trust in any new system. General members of the public and service users must be engaged too and a robust engagement process which involves the public in co-producing new service development will be vital.</p>



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<p><b>Ref PIP066</b> 30 May 2014</p>	<p>Conclusion: The group were mainly in favour of the Quality Contract System and the above comments are critical factors within this general agreement. A key message from the Forum and Champion Network is that the public and service users need to play a key role in developing any new system and bus service. Interest groups such as ours also need to inform the development so that the future bus service is responsive to the needs of local people.</p>