

Bus Services Bill

House of Lords – Report stage – October 2016

Government amendments to Clauses 1, 4 and 9

The Government has tabled a number of amendments to the Bill to boost passenger involvement in the operation of the different agreements outlined under the Bill. We believe it is important to involve the users – in this case bus passengers – in decisions about their services. In this way, they should achieve one of the stated aims of the Bill: to improve the experience of bus passengers.

It is welcome that the Government has listened to the comments from peers during the Bill debates and ourselves and has tabled these amendments so the provisions will be on the face of the Bill. We anticipate that further detail will be included in the guidance which will cover the detailed implementation of the Act when passed.

For each type of scheme – advanced quality partnership, franchising and enhanced partnership – the Government’s amendments would require consultation with, amongst others, the ‘Passengers’ Council’ (the statutory name of Transport Focus) as a statutory consultee. It also requires transport authorities to set out their plans for consulting the views of organisations representing the users to ‘seek their views on how the scheme is working’.

Transport Focus’s views

These are all welcome improvements to the Bill. Much of our research provides pointers about the type of issues where passengers want to be involved. These areas could be included in the guidance:

Design of service

- The specification of the service, standards, performance monitoring and incentive schemes. After the consultation and once agreed, there should be a clear statement of promises for passengers about what they can expect.

Once service commenced

- Seeking continuous assessment and feedback from passengers. This can be done via representative groups, but there is no substitute for asking passengers themselves. Qualitative and quantitative research (such as our Bus Passenger Survey) provide vital feedback about areas to improve: cleanliness, punctuality etc.
- Any changes to the service such as timetables, fares and ticketing
- An effective complaints process can provide useful feedback of problems passengers face.

Performance review

- Once consulting passengers on ‘how well the scheme is working’, there should be an opportunity to review performance and improve the service.

Conducting consultations

- The guidance could include how to publicise, clarify the scope, present information, timescales, dialogue methods and feedback from the consultation.