

Bus Punctuality Project

Progress report for Bus Partnership Forum

1 **Project objectives**

- To gain and disseminate a greater understanding of what causes delays to buses and of the most effective ways of tackling these delays, e.g. the role of bus priority measures
- To understand the issues around collecting and wider sharing of punctuality data
- To achieve punctuality improvements in case study areas

2 Our Project Outline envisaged us:

- identifying up to 20 bus routes across five local authority areas
- discussing with local authorities and operators what data they have available (and hence what they know about the extent, pattern and causes of delays) and what they are doing to address the problems highlighted by the data
- We would then work with each of them to develop and implement an action plan for improving punctuality on each of the selected routes within a defined timeframe.

3 We agreed to work with five volunteer local transport authorities:

- Cambridgeshire
- Derby
- Devon
- Hertfordshire
- Southampton

4 We also agreed to work with each of the English the passenger transport executives with support from pteg.

5 Passenger Focus has had direct discussions with operators in Derby, Hertfordshire and Southampton; elsewhere local authorities have approached the operators on our behalf.

6 A total of 19 routes have now been identified across the five local authorities with whom we are working directly, and a further ten in the PTE areas. The routes give good coverage of both commercial and tendered services.

7 **What's going well?**

- Wide selection of authorities and routes
- Partnership working between authorities and operators
- Some areas are well advanced, have started to analyse data and even identified and started to introduce interventions
- Other authorities have secured a commitment from operators to support innovative gathering of fresh data
- Authorities and operators have identified benefits in the involvement of Passenger Focus, e.g. in further stimulating local partnership working and in supporting funding bids

8 **Challenges**

- Some of our partners are slow to respond – they have other priorities
- We have thus not yet developed plans with timescales for analysing data on delays and their causes, and identifying interventions to address them

- It is taking time to establish the availability of robust data and the ability of authorities and operators to manipulate it to pin down patterns of delays and reasons for delays
- In some cases, robust data will only become available at a later stage, leaving us to choose between delays to the project, changes to the routes or a less ambitious approach to data analysis

9 **Issues**

- One of the principle issues is the availability of robust data to quantify delays and show patterns of delays
- Where such data exists, are appropriate software and sufficient skilled staff available to manipulate it?
- Where such data is not already generated either by GPS systems or an established system of regular observations, can a sustainable way be found to gather the raw data, where necessary prioritising the deployment of resources to collect and analyse it?
- Do authorities and operators have sustainable ways of identifying reasons for delays, and appraising the likelihood that potential interventions will be successful?

10 **Examples**

- Nexus have worked with Go North East to analyse data and develop a detailed action plan of interventions to improve punctuality on route 56, including revised road layouts, changes to traffic light sequencing and enhanced enforcement of bus lanes. Some measures are already being implemented.
- Devon County Council and Stagecoach have jointly contributed to a week-long study of punctuality on route 2 with monitors boarding buses with a notebook and a stopwatch to provide in-depth analysis of the pattern of delays and the reasons for them

11 **Potential products**

- There may be merit in producing a step-by-step practical guide for authorities and operators on how to get the best out of the data that their systems are capable of collecting (including advice on the right software, statistical and other skills)
- There may be potential for Passenger Focus to research particular issues on which a clear passenger view may be welcomed, e.g. the relative merits of simple all day clock-face timetables versus more complex timetables that reflect traffic patterns

12 **Bus Passenger Survey**

- Passenger satisfaction with punctuality ranged from 81% in East Sussex to 64% in West Midlands in last wave of research
- Boarding times and congestion consistently rated as top factors affecting journey length

13 **Further reporting**

- Report on the first phase of activity by the end of the year, possibly focusing on PTEs, where data is more readily available and progress has been quicker
- Seminars to discuss practical lessons