

Sharing Best Practice Workshop – NW England

26 April 2012, 11am – 3pm

County Hall, Preston

Notes

Key points from presentations and group discussions:

	<u>Presentations</u>
1	<p>David Sidebottom, Passenger Team Director, Passenger Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following extension of our remit two years ago to cover the bus industry in England (outside of London), public bodies review retained Passenger Focus through recognition of our work as a consumer organisation with a strong evidence base. However 50% budget cut caused us to refocus and reflect. We will work to change the way we influence; concentrate on a smaller number of passenger priorities and develop relationships and contact methods. Our research, policy and influence capabilities remain intact and we will continue with clear, sound and robust research through National Passenger Survey and Bus Passenger Survey, prioritising where we can make a difference, together with service for complaints. New Passenger Issues Team will focus on 'long term work' of key national passenger themes, such as franchising and developing policy, whilst the Passenger Team looks after 'here and now' work of contact with passengers, using bedrock of research to engage with industry on poor performance and managing relationships with groups and other stakeholders. New Bus Passenger Survey just published, taking in 23 areas of England and delivered with considerable joint funding from PTEs and operators as they can see the benefit of comparison of different areas. Results drawn from over 21,000 responses and is being used by transport authorities to provide evidence base to support bids. Strategy is for this to become a self-sustaining national survey; plan for three-year programme is with DfT. New commission from Go-Ahead just started, giving research a stamp of independence and authority. National Passenger Survey also published, with tweaks to some questions as this continues to develop. Fieldwork is underway researching the impact on communities of cuts to local bus services and how passengers find out or are consulted. Also had money to research passengers' experience of smart card schemes to feed into decision-making for Norman Baker. In the bus industry, there is pressure on budgets and we are disappointed at the blanket cuts, particularly to evening and weekend services. We are developing a best practice guide aimed at local authorities, for effective and better consultation with passengers and residents, with the final draft ready to put to officers after local elections. In the longer term we will work to secure change in bus and train punctuality with access to route information, pursuing poor performance and identifying good practice. Improving the way disruption is dealt with – particularly rail – how does the information work and using technology to put information together quickly. We have assembled a panel of volunteers that we are able to call on for feedback and we have published research following high winds in Scotland. On fares and ticketing and the Command Paper, looking at simplifying ticketing and conditions, opening hours and Schedule 17 and using major processes as levers for change, such as rail franchise replacement and long-term industry planning; ensuring groups' voices are heard. Working together, we want to understand what groups need from us, what is available in return and developing how we can collaborate to better effect and maintain useful

	<p>relationships and how we can help to develop a network and facilitate contact with other groups. We will continue to work to our core principles, using our research and policy base to focus on and prioritise passenger priorities and to having influence at the right time in the right way, looking at how we can involve each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are working in a changing world, with new players such as FixMyTransport.com opening up opportunities and availability of new channels to funnel complaints and join debate in the public domain. Groups could think about being involved, raising awareness. Could provide a useful recruitment ground.
2	<p>Chris Dale, Chair TravelWatch North West</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TravelWatch North West (TWNW) has gone through something of a change itself, after forming in 2003, surviving by becoming a community interest company covering all forms of transport, working in the interests of passengers and groups, influencing industry through research and campaigns. • Next conference is in Blackpool on 14th June, speakers include Blackpool trams and TransPennine Express (TPE). • Responded to House of Commons Transport Select Committee on competition in the bus industry and working with ORR and others on partnerships and Network Rail on alternative Route Utilisation Strategy and fares policy. • Issues include TPE bringing in service changes, with new electrics and pathing to Manchester from Cumbria. Also the West Coast franchise, where TWNW hope to speak to the new bidder. Pressing for full implementation of the Northern Hub, bringing improvements to the Hope Valley Line for example. • Bus network has issues too. Passenger information in country regions, Bus Service Operators' Grant cuts. TWNW projects include survey on service quality and implementing cuts in the north west and on Metrolink; passenger information, Mosley Street closure and the Second City Crossing. Taxis have regulation problems and work is being done with the National Association of Taxi Operators. • Working together, we can fill the gap with regional reach, complementing Railfuture, Bus Users UK (BUUK) and so on. Will there be a rep for ferries? Air passengers? What might the future hold? Bus passengers are far more numerous, yet with minimal representation. Work with BUUK, where key feature is journey end to end with integration of journey and fares, improving perception and the passenger's lot.
3	<p>Professor Paul Salveson, 'The Railway Doctor'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good to be back in Preston where I set up STELLA in 1975, managing decline. Also set up Community Rail Partnerships working together with businesses, rail industry and local government. • Two campaigns in my local area; rail and bus: growth and decline. Bus is threatened with withdrawal, giving impact in Huddersfield area; whilst rail is in growth with desire of six trains per hour and threat of withdrawing stops along the service. • Work with Passenger Focus gives an extra string to the bow in dealing with issues. • Groups are a strong force in the country and sheer scale in the UK is incredible. Volunteers not dependent on funding but highly knowledgeable with experience and beacon of stability; perspective, understanding and good relationships. Historically hostile, industry now engages with a variety of organisations. • Strengths are time commitment people can give, local knowledge and intelligence, bringing assistance in kind and creating good will. Weaknesses are availability of volunteers, sustainability, doing what volunteers or sponsors want and don't get a lot of women! – Look at how Passenger Focus can help in these situations. • Local services with local campaigns for local stations gives diversity of work. Making stations look nice encourages industry to contribute more. However people here are representative of groups, but are groups representative of passengers, eg mums with prams, disabled, young people? Need to pull more people in. Focus on projects – often long term – can take eye off the ball of short term campaigns. Need to also focus on quick wins: extra services or stops are shown to be winners; groups need short

	<p>term objectives as well. There are limited links with rest of voluntary sector, when there are common issues and a lot to learn from wider sector and acting as a co-ordinated body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're all passionate about public transport and often cases look so obvious, but you need evidence to back up the case. Passenger Focus have a very strong research function. • Moving on to social media and internet, we're celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Luddites this year and the tendency is not to use electronic media. If you want to influence, far easier with email that can be forwarded or copied on to others. Also scope for Facebook and Twitter and Passenger Focus have the expertise to help. • Does the outside world take you seriously – need to look at yourselves and ask are we representing interests of passengers? Need action plan towards objectives, with new landscape including LEPs. Have influence where there is money to be spent, engaging in politics to make a difference in local communities. Do need to keep party hat to one side – can weaken influence – need to have positive relationship with all politicians, who are mostly supportive of public transport. • With media, need editor's perspective of story; look at press relationships and how to put issue across. Look at Passenger Focus and other groups. Needs to be news and possibly about local community and of interest. Easiest to get negative story – might be front page, but negative impact on relationship with industry will far outweigh. • Make sure you are influencing key processes eg franchises; even-handedly with all bidders. • Great opportunity to build on solid achievements – recognise strengths and weaknesses, process of evolution and moving forward, with resources available from Passenger Focus, together with practical and creative ideas.
4	<p>David Beer, Passenger Focus, Toolkit Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas for toolkit being put together alongside new Passenger Focus website. Discussion groups have provided very valuable ideas and development of content very much shaped in line with groups' priorities. Passenger Focus also want to use this as an opportunity to put across a flavour of the resources we are planning to develop. • Groups should ensure they are able to take advantage of big opportunities to be heard, such as formal consultations; rail franchise replacement, timetable consultations and impact of service cuts. Supporting resources being developed for gathering evidence and compiling submissions alongside ensuring that key channels of communication are made available for groups' direct access. Research and mystery shopping are two key methods of gathering evidence; guidance will be available for planning effective work, with sound and consistent methodology, creating briefs for all involved, recording and analysing results and writing reports for effective influence. • The wealth of Passenger Focus research is available from our website. This will be revisited to make it easier to find relevant reports. In addition, we are keen to provide more issue-specific extracts of research, to support groups' work, extending its reach and delivering better value for money. For our National Passenger Survey, there is also a tool called Reportal which allows individuals to extract result in a more tailored way and access to verbatim comments, although care is needed to ensure extracts are not narrowed to the point of impacting on statistical significance. • There is also a wealth of data behind the published reports on other key topics, such as the new Bus Passenger Survey, anti-social behaviour, and released capacity from High Speed 2, which we would like to make available to gain greater value for money from our research and to support groups in their local work. • Working with others is of key importance. Communication channels should be available for groups to have dialogue with key stakeholders such as Government departments, transport authorities, Traffic Commissioners, operators and industry organisations. However do let us know of any difficulties with channels being open to you. Equally important is sharing best practice with other groups; coming together on common issues, skills sharing and encouragement. Also where appropriate, providing

	<p>local intelligence back to us, broadening our local reach and making effective use of communications, publicising and sharing wins.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local events are a good way of raising awareness of issues, as a group or supporting others such as surgeries. These can also be a useful way of recruiting new members, gaining feedback through questionnaires and harnessing interest. For example, working recently with Bus Users UK at a joint surgery in Kendal, the local bus user group joined us and canvassed support for their group. They signed up ten new members during the day! The appeals Passenger Focus deals with may also provide individuals wanting to be put in touch with local groups and our advice line is also available to groups as a first point of contact. An essential part of communication is through email and internet. Not only being expected by the industry, but also giving access to the wealth of resources available online and useful links to industry organisations and published statistics through our website. New media can also be an effective tool; forums such as FixMyTransport.com for reporting local problems can also be used to give a 'local expert' response. Facebook and Twitter can extend local reach and are being used more to reach passengers individually and add to the presence of organisations – including Passenger Focus.
	<p><u>Group Discussions</u></p> <p>Groups discussed priorities for shaping proposed toolkit resources</p>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase professionalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for information First-line contacts: particularly rail industry Co-ordination of responses to key consultations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as an advocate – from beginning Setting terms of reference How to involve lobbying groups eg West Coast 250? Active notification: prompts and incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visible facebook & twitter – appropriate strategy Updated aspirations readily available Sharing information, experience and research for useful development Help and support for revenue protection Barriers and issues across boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to get together Passenger counts to inform capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticket sales, concessions, wayfarer Assistance from staff at smaller stations Support for groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Honest broker Establishing groups/partnerships Pinpointing who to speak to Issues of being listened to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper consultation Passenger champion role Rely on to get a result Driving forward the efficiency campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations eg 30% savings in new franchises Issue of rising fares Strong demand for better efficiency What's 'nice to have' v what we <u>need</u> to have

2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with issues and work with Passenger Focus to resolve • Northern England franchise – need to get in early • Rural bus service regeneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spread wings to include bus users and rail • Service levels • Passenger environment – bus stop/station information, signage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collection point for information – resource • Northern Hub – input <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of services – passengers rely on being there - Prioritise passengers - Influence Network Rail - Encourage working together • What do we want/can we give to Passenger Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contacts: job roles and between groups - Events and more scope to liaise - How to apply ‘national’ research ‘locally’, set off campaign and use the data - Methodology and sharing best practice - How best to use the results • Lobbying – getting the level right <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Northern Hub – LEPs – rural bus services - Establishing consultation process and co-ordination - Giving voice to local views, needs & priorities - Resource, facilities, meetings • Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing/asking for resources from other groups - Encouraging volunteering – increasing diversity - Accessing ‘pots of money’ - Rules about carrying money over – applying for right money
	<p><u>What next?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight regional events around Britain, which will be completed in May • Priorities compiled from each event to inform toolkit development • New Passenger Focus website will include User Group resources • Website under construction from May, with on-going development and updating • Groups will be invited to view new website once this is available • Future event details will be forwarded as programme develops • Key contact point for groups is usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk
	<p><i>Thank you for your contributions</i></p>