



Passenger Focus response to Wales Transport Strategy Consultation

October 2006



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1 Do you broadly agree with the social outcomes identified? If not, what else needs to be included to ensure that this transport strategy supports the social priorities set out in our Wales Spatial Plan and inter-related strategy documents?

Passenger Focus welcomes the commitment to developing a Transport Strategy that extends beyond traditional transport policy pre-occupations of providing increased capacity and reducing travel times, the 'predict and provide' approach, to addressing wider social and environmental concerns. As such, we fully support the social outcomes that have been identified.

One specific social outcome that Passenger Focus is keen to see further developed is that relating to 'achieving greater use of the more sustainable and healthy forms of travel'. Our organisation has long advocated a policy that students aged between 16-18 and in full-time education should be eligible for half-fare rail tickets rather than the full adult fare. *Connecting Wales* specifically talks about extending concessionary travel to 16-19 year olds (pp 44-45), so we would encourage the adoption of this approach to rail fares.

2 Do you broadly agree with the economic outcomes identified? If not, what else needs to be included to ensure that this Transport Strategy supports the economic priorities set out in our Wales Spatial Plan and Wales A Vibrant Economy?

Passenger Focus supports the economic outcomes that have been identified.

With regards to the 'Improving connectivity (links) within Wales and Internationally' priority, rail has an important role to play. The *National Rail Trends Yearbook 2004/5* (<http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/294.pdf>, page 86) shows that arterial rail routes are of growing importance to Wales. Rail trips between Wales and nearly all the English regions have shown strong growth in recent years, including:

- London, up 28% compared with 10 years ago
- South West, up 50%
- North West, up 28%
- West Midlands, up 50%



The Transport Strategy provides a commitment (page 34) to ‘invest to develop the strategic road and rail networks’ and these figures underline the growing importance of rail in this strategic picture.

In term of the ‘Improving efficient/sustainable movement of people’ outcome, *Connecting Wales* regularly mentions the importance of improving the planning of journeys. Passenger Focus endorses this view and would like to emphasise the importance of providing door-door travel information relating to public transport, which is crucial to persuade people to make a modal shift.

In relation to the ‘Improving access to employment opportunities’ outcome, the growth in passenger numbers in recent years on the Valley Lines network (p. 27 points to a 40% growth in the five years to 2004) illustrates the vital contribution rail can play here.

3 Do you broadly agree with the environmental outcomes identified? If not, what else needs to be included to ensure that this Transport Strategy supports the environmental priorities set out in our Wales Spatial Plan and Environment Strategy?

As noted at Question one, Passenger Focus welcomes the broad focus of the Wales Transport Strategy including the incorporation of environmental outcomes.

Passenger Focus supports the environmental outcomes that have been identified and wishes to highlight the important role that rail services (passenger and freight) can play in their achievement. Recent research from the Strategic Rail Authority, for example, indicated that average carbon dioxide emissions per passenger kilometre for rail and bus were similar and were around two-thirds of those for car passengers per kilometre.

4 Do you broadly agree that the three themes (identified in Chapter three) will provide the best means of addressing the outcomes?

Passenger Focus is in broad agreement with the three themes identified.

We are fully supportive of Theme one’s aims to achieve a more effective and efficient transport system. We would emphasize the importance of integrated transport approaches in achieving these goals.



We also endorse Theme two's aims of encouraging more sustainable and healthy forms of travel, and welcome the recognition (page vii) of rail as playing a key role in its achievement.

We are cautiously supportive of Theme three's desire to minimise the need to travel. We understand and are in agreement with efforts to reduce travel demand through initiatives such as encouraging and supporting home working and teleconferencing. However, it is imperative that 'minimising the need to travel' is not translated into 'making travel more difficult' – for example, through under investment in infrastructure and/or aggressive fare policies on public transport that address overcapacity by 'pricing off' demand.

5 Have we identified the most effective interventions, measures and initiatives for each of the themes to maximise the delivery of the outcomes?

Passenger Focus is broadly supportive of the delivery methods that have been outlined.

With regards to Theme one, we welcome the commitment to invest in new infrastructure and technology (pp 25-26) to support the development of a more efficient and effective transport network.

In relation to Theme two, the commitment shown to the co-ordination and integration of transport services is very welcome. Passenger Focus firmly endorses this approach as illustrated by our recent report *Strategy to Reality – Using Local Transport Plans to Deliver on Rail*. This identifies best practice in a number of the areas referred to in the Wales Transport Strategy such as bus/rail coordination and integrated public transport information.

6 Do you think this flexible approach is right or should we be emphasising any one of the themes to maximise the role transport can play in the delivery of the outcomes?

Passenger Focus is comfortable with a flexible approach, although our view is that Theme one should receive the greatest emphasis at the current time.



7 Is it helpful to include examples of best practice via case studies as detailed at the end of Chapters 5, 6 and 7?

Yes.

8 Are there any other examples of best practice that we should be highlighting in this Transport Strategy?

Passenger Focus, and its predecessor the Rail Passengers Council, have produced a number of publications that contain relevant examples of best practice. Particularly relevant is the February 2005 publication, *Strategy to Reality – Using Local Transport Plans to Deliver on Rail*, which has a number of examples of integrated transport solutions from across Great Britain.

A copy is available on request or is available for download from:

<http://www.ltpnetwork.gov.uk/Documents/Document/Using%20LTPs%20to%20deliver%20on%20Rail.pdf>

9 Do the transport tools set out for each of the outcomes represent the most effective interventions? Are there any other key measures of initiatives that we should be highlighting?

Passenger Focus is broadly supportive of the transport tools that have been identified. We are, however, opposed to financial support for a new intra-Wales air service. Our opposition is based on the view that such a service is likely to be of limited passenger appeal due to the need for significant onward travel from any North Wales air field to the final destination for the majority of users, which would negate much of the time saving compared with other modes. In addition, promoting air travel raises a number of environmental concerns that are in conflict with the overarching Environmental Outcome of the Transport Strategy.

Passenger Focus believes the needs for long-distance transport within Wales would be better catered for by investment in a faster rail service between North and South Wales, as recommended by the recent National Assembly for Wales Committee on Rail Infrastructure and Improved Passenger Services in its final report.



10 Will the set of indicators presented adequately capture progress in delivering this Transport Strategy? If not, please identify any additional or alternative indicators.

Passenger Focus proposes some additional indicators, particularly relevant to rail travel, that will further strengthen the set of indicators to be used to measure progress in achieving the objectives of the Transport Strategy.

In terms of Economic Outcomes, Measure 6 looks at improving connectivity within Wales and internationally. This should include a measure of the growth in journeys by rail. As National Rail Trends already records it (<http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/294.pdf> , page 86), this could be achieved without any additional cost.

With relation to Measure seven (Improving Efficient and Reliable Movement), page 25 of the strategy emphasizes the need to maximise the capacity and reliability of existing infrastructure. This aim does not seem to be covered by any specific measures at the moment. From a rail perspective, potential approaches might include measuring the increase in rail growth and some form of capacity measure, such as the number of people standing or the PIXC (Passengers in Excess of Capacity) assessment currently applied to London commuter services. The latter measure would be particularly applicable to Cardiff Valley peak services.

Passenger Focus also believes it would be beneficial to get some broad-based qualitative measures of how people view travel, such as through assessing passenger satisfaction with each of the main modes. Through the National Passenger Survey, Passenger Focus would be able to provide such an assessment for rail users at no cost.

Any questions regarding this response should be addressed to:

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name of the Rail Passengers Council