

YOUNG PEOPLE’S WORKSHOP

The H.Y.P.E (Helping Young People Excel) project has an overarching goal - to improve public transport for young people in the West Midlands, so they can succeed in their everyday lives and so the Alliance can meet its aim of increasing passenger numbers. Whilst young people in the region are the largest group of bus users, they are also the most dissatisfied with almost every aspect of public transport, something the Bus Alliance is determined to address.

Many young people in the region depend entirely on public transport to get them to education, employment or training and whilst other industries tend to adapt to their highest user base, the public transport industry has not always kept pace.

Tamika Smith, the Young Person Representative on the West Midlands Bus Alliance Board, has arranged a workshop with young people in early 2017 to gather their views, although not necessarily on public transport specifically.

She explained: “Giving young people a chance to have their say in what would improve the public transport industry for them is a giant leap forward. The idea of the workshop in January/ February will give us a diverse range of young people’s views.

“However, we are not planning to ask for their comments on public transport outright as some people can hold public transport in a negative light and it’s very easy to have a bad journey the day before the workshop and that would

easily affect how someone would answer the questions we plan to ask.”

Therefore, the questions which could be asked will be along similar lines to the following example - “Where do you enjoy spending your spare time?” the reply to which could be “I enjoy spending time at Bodega Bar in Birmingham City Centre, they have good food/drinks, a vibrant atmosphere, fun music, comfortable seating and everyone seems to be having a good time.

From that reply, we could take the view that buses should provide a nice fun environment for young people, with the possibility of music and vehicles need to have comfortable seats where people can enjoy their journey.

BETTER BUSES, BETTER LIVES FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS’ POOREST

In a powerful illustration of what the Bus Alliance is aiming to achieve, a report by the sustainable transport group Greener Journeys highlights that improving local bus services would boost employment, improve income and reduce social deprivation in the West Midlands.

- 9,909 more jobs, the result of a 2.7% fall in employment deprivation
- 22,647 people with increased income, the result of a 2.8% drop in income deprivation
- 2,596 fewer years of life lost
- 7,313 more people with adult skills
- 0.7% increase in post-16 education

‘The Value of the Bus to Society’ quantifies for the first time how bus services tackle social deprivation. A 10% improvement in local bus services is linked to a 3.6% reduction in social deprivation, taking into account employment, income, life expectancy and skills.

The report demonstrates the important role that buses have in helping to reduce social deprivation in the UK, where 1 in 4 people are at risk of social exclusion, and 1 in 4 people do not have access to a car.

The West Midlands features heavily in government statistics of the most deprived parts of the country. 40% of Birmingham’s areas are in the 10% most deprived in England. Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall also appear in the top 20 most deprived towns and cities.

Peter Coates, Managing Director of National Express West Midlands, commented: “Our buses take a million people to work, to college, to the shops and to see their friends and family every day. A frequent and reliable bus service is not just good for passengers, it’s good for the West Midlands economy too.”

Greener Journeys’ report shows that a 10% improvement in local bus services in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods across England would result in:

The Value of the Bus to Society builds on existing research by Greener Journeys showing that buses bring huge economic benefits. Some 3.5 million people in the UK travel to work by

bus, and these commuters generate more than £64 billion worth of goods and services per year.

And proper investment in local bus infrastructure delivers vast rewards, with every £1 spent on local bus priority measures delivering up to £7 in economic benefit.

Claire Haigh, Chief Executive of Greener Journeys, added: “This vital new research demonstrates that bus travel doesn’t just benefit the economy, it can also help alleviate deprivation and improve people’s life chances. It shows that investment in buses can deliver truly inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

“This new evidence shows that bus investment is not just a transport policy – it is a health policy, an education policy, a skills policy, a wellbeing policy, and a social cohesion policy. We urge government to consider these findings when contemplating future investment in bus services.”

BUS ALLIANCE



CONGESTION-BUSTING TOP OF THE AGENDA

Data suggests that every 1% increase in journey time results in a 1% decrease in patronage. More positively though, the converse is also true. Congestion continues to grow across the region due to an expanding economy, an increase in development and highways maintenance and improvement schemes.

Therefore, tackling congestion and improving journey speeds is one of the key objectives of the West Midlands Bus Alliance.

Through the Bus Alliance, Transport for West Midlands and National Express West Midlands have committed to jointly funding a post with the aim of addressing the impact of congestion on bus.

The post works with Bus Alliance partners to identify congestion hotspots, seek solutions and funding and ultimately deliver schemes on the ground to bring about change.

To date this has included:

- Lode Lane Public Transport Priority Corridor in Solihull – 8 minute saving across 3 km of route which includes large sections of bus lane, signal optimisation and £2m worth of investment from National Express in new vehicles. The total cost of the scheme was £6.75m
- Blossomfield Road / Dingle Lane junction improvements – nearly 4 minute journey time saving (50%) during the am peak towards Solihull and 20% in the PM peak

- North Birmingham Traffic Signals – signal upgrades across 2 junctions to include bus priority measures through selective vehicle technology. This has delivered nearly 4 minutes of savings on this key corridor
- Merry Hill Signal Improvements – signal validation and co-ordination across 3 major junctions around Merry Hill
- Caldmore Road - introduction of a one way street to ease congestion and access difficulties for buses exiting Walsall town centre

Other schemes are progressing to delivery through the LEP-funded Journey Time Reliability for Growth Package being jointly delivered by Birmingham City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in partnership with TfWM. We are also hopeful of a successful outcome to further bids submitted to the Birmingham & Solihull and Black Country LEP’s to deliver more congestion-busting schemes.

In addition to these large schemes, we have also worked proactively to ensure that enforcement of parking and other traffic regulations are focused on bus corridors, as well as ensuring that the effect of congestion caused by the delivery of highways and utility maintenance and improvement schemes is minimised. In some cases bus priority measures have been delivered, including the introduction of a bus only turn on to Broad Street, one of the key bus corridors out of Birmingham.

We want to hear from you!

The West Midlands Bus Alliance is comprised of representatives from bus operators, local councils, Highways England and other partners - and we'd be delighted to hear from you.

This is your newsletter, so please let us know about any projects you are involved with so that best practice and successes can be celebrated and shared with all the partners.

Projects could include new facilities for passengers, bus priority measures designed to increase punctuality and reliability, harnessing the latest technology to make integrated travel even more seamless, staff who have achieved great things or gone

above and beyond in their day-to-day duties or new initiatives aimed at increasing patronage.

They could also include innovative ticketing initiatives, cutting-edge solutions to reducing carbon emissions, network reviews and the introduction of new routes.

Please contact Matthew Finn at the West Midlands Combined Authority if you would like any of the excellent work the Bus Alliance is doing included in future editions of the newsletter.

MatthewFinn@centro.org.uk
0121 214 7157



Police Community Support Officers promoting the See Something Say Something initiative

SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING PUTS CRIMINAL BACK BEHIND BARS

A prolific offender was sent back to prison after a passenger reported anti-social behaviour on a Birmingham bus.

The customer on a 28 bus used the See Something, Say Something service to tell the authorities about two other passengers who were openly taking drugs.

Officers at Safer Travel Partnership police contacted National Express West Midlands to get hold of the CCTV footage from the bus. They worked with their colleagues at West Midlands Police to identify the offender, who had recently been released from prison.

Michael Rowe, 35, was on licence, with good behaviour conditions that he was supposed to keep to. Safer Travel Police worked with Probation services to get him recalled back to prison to serve the rest of his sentence.

Inspector Rachel Crump of the Safer Travel Partnership’s Police Team and the West Midlands Bus Alliance, said: “The information we receive from passengers through See Something, Say Something is incredibly useful.

“This case shows that, although passengers may not see blue lights arriving immediately, they can be assured that we are working hard behind the scenes to tackle this kind of unacceptable anti-social behaviour.”

The Safer Travel Partnership consists of Transport for West Midlands, part of the West Midlands Combined Authority, West Midlands Police, British Transport Police and transport operators.

See Something, Say Something allows people to pass on details of nuisance behaviour to the Partnership, which operates specifically to tackle and deter crime on the region’s transport network.

All passengers need to do is text “Bus” followed by a space to 83010, with a message giving as much information as possible about the nature of the incident. Anyone witnessing criminal behaviour should ring 999 as they would do normally.

A dedicated Safer Travel Anti-Social Behaviour Team investigates each report it receives.

For more information see <http://www.safertravel.info/>

CLEANER AIR TECHNOLOGY IN ACTION

National Express West Midlands (NXWM) has been piloting cutting-edge technology to improve air quality in the region, investing millions of pounds to drastically clean up the emissions from its fleet of 1,500 buses.

The Birmingham-based operator has been acting as the industry’s guinea pig, testing the first buses in the world fitted with stop-start transmission. Many cars already have stop-start gearboxes, but the technology is relatively new to buses.

A year ago, it fitted two of its single-deck ADL Enviro 200 buses with Voith Turbo stop-start gearboxes. Since then, the buses have clocked up over 80,000 miles on the 71 and 72 routes between Solihull and Birmingham.

Colin Saward, Head of Engineering at NXWM, said: “We are totally committed to playing a full part in helping to clean up our air – especially in the centre of Birmingham. This technology cuts fuel consumption by 10%, therefore also cutting harmful emissions.

“The stop-start gearbox trial was extremely successful, so every one of the 96 double-deckers we bought in 2016 came with these stop-start gearboxes.”

Harnessing the latest in technology to reduce emissions is a crucial part of the West Midlands Combined Authority’s Low Emission Bus Delivery Plan, championed by the Bus Alliance. This strategy recently won the 2016 National Air Quality Award for Passenger Transport.

Steve Hayes, Network Development and Delivery Manager for Transport for West Midlands, added: “Our Low Emission Bus Delivery Plan was recognised as being industry-leading, with particular recognition given to our partnership approach with bus operators and local authorities. This is testament to the work of our Bus Alliance, of which tackling air quality is a key objective.”

The West Midlands Bus Alliance was signed a year ago. Transport operators and local authorities publicly pledged to put £150 million into working in partnership to grow numbers of passengers, keep customer satisfaction high and improve air quality.

STAGECOACH INVEST £1.3 MILLION IN NEW BUSES

As part of its continued service development, Stagecoach has invested £1.3 million in eight new buses for Leamington, Warwick, Stratford, Coventry and surrounding areas. The vehicles will primarily be used on the Stagecoach Unibus route and the X18 between Evesham, Bidford, Stratford, Wellesbourne, Warwick, Leamington and Coventry.

The Unibus service runs from the popular student area of Sydenham to Warwick University via Leamington, with up to 12 buses an hour, carrying 1.8 million students a year. The new Enviro 400 MMC buses meet even higher environmental standards, reaching Euro 6 emissions. They also feature Wi-Fi and USB charging sockets for the first time on the service. The investment also boosts the recently enhanced X18 half hourly service between Coventry and Evesham, a pivotal link for people getting to school, college and work.

In the past six years Stagecoach has invested over £5.65 million in new buses for the Leamington area. Steve Burd, Managing Director for Stagecoach Midlands, said: “We are delighted to introduce this new fleet of buses onto some of our most popular routes and I’m sure they will be well received – particularly the free Wi-Fi and USB charging points.”



Photo by Adam Marsden