



MOVING HASTINGS FORWARD
QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

Minutes for the Quality Bus Partnership Meeting held on Friday 7 September 2007 3-5pm Hastings Town Hall.

Present:

Don Benn (DB)	Passenger Transport Manager, East Sussex County Council (ESCC)
Sarah Cook (SC)	Transport Planner, Hastings Borough Council
Keith Hayward (KH)	Parking Enforcement Manager, Hastings Borough Council
Neil Instrall (NI)	Operations Director Stagecoach in Hastings
Jon Wheeler (JW)	Transport Strategy Manager, ESCC
Cllr Matthew Lock (Cllr ML)	Lead Member for Transport & Environment, ESCC.
Cllr John Wilson (Cllr JW)	Representing HBC

1. Introduction and Apologies:

Councillor Lock chaired the meeting.

Apologies:

Paul Southgate	Stagecoach Managing Director of Stagecoach in Hastings & East Kent
Paul Harding (TB)	Stagecoach Operations Manager

Minutes Prepared by:

Julie Nolan

2. Minutes and actions from previous meeting on 8 June 2007.

Clearways – The Ridge / Hillside Road: A request has been submitted for the installation of clearways at these locations; however the contractor has a backlog due to adverse weather over the summer.

Bexhill / Hastings Link Road: to be covered later in the meeting.

Battle Road Corridor: JW reported that Siemens have undertaken a review and have identified quick potential improvements that can be made to the Scute System; tags on buses that activate the signals as they go over loop triggers giving buses priority. The Silverhill junction is tricky and significant engineering would be required to effect any improvements there. NI felt that the issue at Silverhill is that there is a conflict between the 12 buses per hour in each direction that they operate on the 'Arrows' services to and from Hollington, and the 3 buses per hour in each direction they operate on Service 26/26A to and from The Conquest. In the past Highways and Siemens have indicated that they cannot resolve this and Stagecoach have asked for priority to be given to the Hollington services as they have the highest usage.

Councillor Lock advised the meeting that there is the possibility of a major supermarket chain opening a store in the Silverhill area, and if this were to happen at some point in the future, major improvements to the junction would be sought, although it is likely that such a development would be some years in the future.

Cllr ML raised the issue of vehicles turning right at the Silverhill junction from Sedlescombe Road North into Battle Road, which causes the traffic to back up. **Action: SC will refer to Ian Tingley and the Traffic Section.**

Central Parking Zone: Colin Buchanan will undertake the economic impact study and there is a meeting on 12/9 to start the study off.

Dropping off stops in the Borough: NI circulated this information at the end of the meeting.

Punctuality: DB reported that the punctuality monitoring is consistent with the Traffic Commissioners output, and results are close to the ESCC's results.

On-Bus Surveys: DB advised the meeting that it has been decided to leave this until the QBP method was in place so as to avoid a haphazard result.

Repainting of Bus Stop Clearways in Queens Road: This is now on a list to be done.

3. Minutes of the QBP Stakeholder Meeting on 1 August

Ashdown House: SC advised the meeting that a new representative from Ashdown House had attended the meeting.

QBP Proposals and Targets: A draft of the QBP's proposals and targets had been discussed and one aspect that had come over strongly was the need for more low floor buses. Concern had also been raised about the Eastbourne routes and there was still a strong desire for more evening and weekend services.

There was a feeling that the more major issues have now been resolved and that relatively minor issues are now being discussed.

Frequency of Stakeholder Meetings: DB advised the meeting that he felt that there was now a need to reduce the frequency of the stakeholder meetings to four a year, in line with the QBP meetings, and Cllr ML suggested that the stakeholder group could take on a monitoring role if the meetings were synchronised. However he felt this should be with the agreement of the stakeholders, and if the meetings were reduced to four a year, there should be the option of two additional emergency meetings if necessary.

SC suggested that the stakeholder minutes be looked at and a report compiled to analyse what issues have been raised and dealt with. This will be a task for her replacement.

Bohemia Road Services: At the last stakeholder meeting the issue of the lack of buses serving Bohemia Road re-emerged, with a lack of buses serving the sports centre being a particular concern and Councillor Scott has indicated that feedback from his constituents has also highlighted concern about this issue,. The meeting agreed that there are adequate connecting buses but people generally don't like changing buses, the perception being that there will be a long wait for the second bus. SC suggested that perhaps a marketing leaflet could be produced to persuade people that changing buses needn't be problematic.

Inaudible Bells on Buses: Concerns had been raised at the Stakeholder group about bells being inaudible to the drivers, however the stakeholders were reassured that a light is also activated in the drivers' cab when the bell is rung.

Passengers Standing: The issue of passengers standing at the front of the bus talking to the driver was also raised.

Double Decker Buses on Evening Services: PH had advised NI that the biggest concern raised at the meeting had been the switch to double decker buses on evening services. DB advised the meeting that he had discussed the issue with Paul Borthwick of the Hastings & Rother Disability Forum, who understood the reasons behind this change. NI advised the meeting that it was very unlikely that low floor double decker buses could be introduced anytime soon.

4. Parking Issues (including Conquest Hospital)

Code 47 Enforcement: KH reported that enforcement of the Code 47 clearways was ongoing. There had been a 49% increase in tickets issued.

Conquest Hospital: KH advised the meeting that from their point of view there were no problems at The Conquest hospital, and no problems had been reported by the Fire and Ambulance services. However JW reported continuing complaints from residents of Little Ridge Avenue about 'Conquest parkers', and it was acknowledged that further parking restrictions would be needed to tackle the parking issues in this area, (the bus stops at the north and south side of the Hillside Road junction are to be made into clearways). NI advised the meeting that there is no space at the hospital to provide more bus services and there is already often a queue of buses waiting to negotiate the roundabout. NI is happy with enforcement, and DB pointed out that enforcement in the Borough is much better than elsewhere in the County.

5. Highways Issues

Havelock Road Stop G bus stop improvement update: DB advised the meeting that this is the busiest bus stop in the town and due to passenger growth it is in need of improvement. Proposed improvements are now at the detailed design stage, but the proximity of the pedestrian crossing was causing problems. SC advised the meeting that a Section 106 contribution had come from Seospace for these improvements and it was agreed that this issue be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Link Road: DB has had a meeting with Paul Adams of Seospace. It was felt that an independent view was needed on the best use of the link road, which would also result in improved services on the A259. NI advised the meeting that it was difficult for them to predict the demand for services on the proposed road but Cllr ML felt that Stagecoach should be more forthcoming with what services they would like on the new road and their vision of the future in relation to these developments. NI responded that if tenders were invited for link road services, Stagecoach would be certainly be bidding. Cllr JW felt that it was essential that plans for bus services were in place before the government / public enquiry make their decision and it was noted that some campaigners against the link road were convinced that there would be no bus services on the new road and that this was forming part of their opposition to it. Cllr ML felt that a holistic approach to proposals needs to be adopted and with this in mind It was agreed that a meeting with Paul Adams, Paul Southgate JW, DB, Cllr ML and NI should be arranged in order to discuss these issues.

Ore Valley: NI said that Stagecoach was disappointment by the proposed road layout for buses at Ore Valley. JW said that the design had come from Seospace's consultants, but he would pass on their concerns.

Warrior Square: JW advised the meeting that a post construction audit had raised issues about visibility on the crossing, and on the advise of the road safety team another audit will be commissioned and remedial works may be necessary. Lining and signing issues have also been raised with May Gurney. Cllr JW complained that the traffic lights do not allow enough time for cars exiting Warrior Square, and Cllr ML agreed that cars are often held up even if there are no buses approaching the junction. JW agreed to check this out with the traffic signals team. SC reported that the surfacing on the zebra crossing has created a trip hazard. **Action JW to refer to Traffic Signals Team.**

6. QBP Action Plan and Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP)

Progress with PIP Targets: SC advised the meeting that the action plan had been finalised and is due to go HBC Cabinet on Monday, and to the ESCC lead member on 15 October. Once this has been done, a public launch and press release can be arranged. NI felt that there needs to be a meeting between DB / JW / NI / PH and others if necessary, to discuss practical considerations.

DB advised the meeting that he had just received the results of a passenger satisfaction survey carried out by Brett Associates. The survey had been carried out on the same basis as the survey of 2005, although with a bigger sample, and the results were that 76% of passengers were satisfied / very satisfied with bus services, a big increase on the 59% figure found in the 2005 survey. Cllr ML thought that the 18% increase in passenger numbers and the introduction of free passes could account for the improved figures, but DB felt that the introduction of low floor buses and improved frequency of services had also played a part.

SC advised the meeting that this result affects the targets recently set, but rather than change the figures at this stage it would be better to say that we have exceeded the target and make the necessary adjustments for next year.

A query had been received from Councillor Birch with regards to Monday's cabinet meeting in relation to commercial sensitivity etc. SC spoke to Richard Homewood during the meeting and he said he would brief lead members in this regard before the meeting on Monday.

7. Bus Stop Improvement Programme

JW advised the meeting that Phase 5 is now complete and stops for Phase 6 have been identified and will include stops on routes 20 and 21 closer to the town centre. Design work will start for Phase 6 this Autumn for implementation next year.

8. School Children & Child Fares (standing item)

NI reported that he had received correspondence from a Debbie Clifford complaining about the treatment of foreign language students by bus drivers. He advised the meeting that in order to practice dealing with our currency, the students are encouraged by the schools to pay for their fares with £20 notes. Whilst a passenger paying with a large denomination note would not normally be a problem, when faced with a queue of students all trying to pay with £20 notes the drivers have been unable to provide change. Ms Clifford has also complained that her calls to Stagecoach relating to the late running of route 22 had not been returned. However no record of any phone calls from Ms Clifford have been found by either Paul Harding or the Dover call centre. Her third complaint related to passengers being refused entry to buses with push bikes. Bikes are of course not permitted on buses for safety reasons. SC advised NI that she has spoken to Debbie Clifford and has told her that in order to investigate her complaint about late running services details of the dates and times of the services concerned will be needed. **Action: Stagecoach to ring Debbie Clifford with regards to her complaints and those from Abbey Study Holidays.**

9. Any Other Business

Update on ESCC PT Review: A report, currently still being written, is due to go to Cabinet on 25 September. A meeting with Stagecoach will be held subsequently. Cllr ML agreed to attend the next Stakeholder Group meeting if requested.

Routing of Services to Bohemia Road: This item had been covered earlier.

Drivers not stopping for passengers at bus stops: This item had been raised by Councillor Scott. SC circulated copies of the complaint that Councillor Scott had received from his constituents. **Action: Stagecoach to contact the complainants and Councillor Scott direct.**

Closure of bridge at Rye: NI advised the meeting of the closure of the bridge on the A259 at Rye by the Highways Agency, from 1 October for four weeks. It has been agreed that buses on routes that use the bridge will terminate there and passengers will have to walk over the bridge to pick up a connecting service; Primary school children will be escorted over the bridge. DB said that an information leaflet is being printed next week, and Cllr ML requested that Councillors Peter Jones and Keith Glazier be warned specifically about this closure.

'Discover East Sussex and Kent Coast by Bus': NI advised the meeting that the East Sussex version of this booklet has now been published and copies are widely available.

Bexhill Road works: JW advised the meeting that resurfacing work is due to be carried out on Bexhill Road in the next few weeks.

10. Dates and Time of Next Meetings:

Friday 7th December 2-4pm in Hastings Town Hall