

Draft Local Transport Bill

DRAFT

As a Trade Association that represents the Private Hire and Taxi Operator's role in Public Transport the LPHCA will be responding and publishing our response to this considerable consultation.

Amongst our future interests are bus lane usage, picking up & setting down, red routes, parking enforcement, road pricing, our role in the Olympics, contributing to a reduction in congestion, reducing emissions, working safety, training and development of our workforce and many more topics.

Our response will be published in full in the next edition of Private Hire News and on our website www.lphca.co.uk

The Government is committed to ensuring that we are well equipped to meet not only today's transport challenges, but also those of ten or twenty years' time. The draft Local Transport Bill is a key part of the Government's strategy to meet this commitment, empowering local authorities to take appropriate steps to meet local transport needs in the light of local circumstances.

The draft Bill sets out the Government's legislative proposals to:

- enable local authorities to improve the quality of local bus services, building on the measures set out last December in *Putting Passengers First*;
- reform the arrangements for local transport governance in our major conurbations, to ensure strong local leadership and a coherent approach to transport across individual local authority boundaries and across different transport modes; and
- reform the existing legislation relating to local road pricing schemes to ensure that, where local authorities wish to develop local schemes, they have the freedom and flexibility to do so in a way that best meets local needs - while ensuring that any schemes are consistent and interoperable.

The draft Bill was published for public consultation and Parliamentary pre-legislative scrutiny on 22 May 2007.

The public consultation closes on **Friday 7 September**, and full details of how to respond are contained in Chapter 7 of the consultation document.

Executive summary

The core purpose of the Draft Bill is to tackle congestion and improve public transport

E.1 The Department for Transport's aim is transport that works for everyone. This means a transport system which sustains economic growth and improves productivity; contributes to our objectives for tackling climate change and other environmental challenges; and enhances access to jobs, services and social networks, including for the most disadvantaged.

E.2 Rising demand for transport is a consequence of a strong and prosperous economy, and increasing globalisation of markets for goods and services. Against

that background, and despite planned transport spending of some £140 billion over the ten years to 2015, congestion is expected to increase by 25 per cent over the same period.

E.3 As Sir Rod Eddington pointed out in his advice to government last December, the prospect of rising congestion now presents a significant risk to our future economic performance. We therefore need to act now to ensure that we are equipped to meet the future transport needs of our economy, while also continuing to meet our environmental and social goals.

E.4 There is no single policy that, by itself, will address all these issues. That is why our strategy is based around a broad package of measures. These include targeted increases in road capacity where justified, sustained investment in public transport, and better management of our existing transport networks.

E.5 The measures contained in the draft Bill form part of this wider strategy to address our future transport challenges. For the most part, the extent of the provisions in the draft Bill is confined to England and Wales, though a small number of measures would apply throughout Great Britain.

The Draft Bill as a whole is about empowering transport delivery at the local level

E.6 The draft Bill seeks to empower local authorities to develop local solutions to the local transport challenges they face, consistent with the devolutionary principles set out in the Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*. It seeks to give those local authorities that need them strengthened powers to deliver a local transport system that is best suited to local needs by:

- giving them the mix of powers required to harness the investment and innovation of the bus industry to meet the specific needs of the local community;
- setting out proposals that would enable our major urban areas to strengthen their capacity to deliver efficient transport networks designed around local needs; and
- updating the legislative basis for those local authorities who decide to take forward local road pricing schemes as part of a package of transport improvements.

Developing the bus market through stronger joint working between public and private sectors

E.7 Buses play a key role in our transport system. They account for two thirds of all journeys made by public transport. The post-war decline in bus patronage is now levelling off, and we have seen the first year-on-year increases in patronage for decades. However, in too many places the current framework is still not delivering the quality of service that passengers expect. The draft Bill seeks to ensure we have a framework that enables more areas to replicate the successes that some areas have already achieved.

E.8 Last year we carried out an extensive review of bus services across the country, and in December 2006 published *Putting Passengers First*, a set of policy proposals designed to help improve the standard of bus services across the country. Taken together, they constitute a balanced package of measures, which aim to:

- promote more effective partnership working between local authorities and bus operators, to deliver services that are better matched to the needs of passengers in their local areas;
- make the implementation of 'quality contracts' schemes a realistic option in areas where it is in the public interest for local authorities to take greater control over bus services;
- provide a new regime to deliver better punctuality, for the first time holding local authorities as well as bus operators to account for their contribution to punctuality performance; and
- support further development of the community transport sector, by removing unnecessary restrictions and by streamlining the system for issuing permits to community transport providers.

E.9 The proposals were welcomed by local authorities and bus operators alike, and the draft Bill includes the legislative provisions that would support delivery of the policies set out in *Putting Passengers First*.

Strengthening transport strategy and delivery in our major urban areas

E.10 There is a broad consensus that the current arrangements for the administration of statutory transport functions ("governance") in the major English cities outside London do not

adequately support effective transport planning and delivery. The existing legislation lacks flexibility and needs to be updated to reflect changing patterns of transport needs and use. This need is likely to become more pressing as road congestion increases.

E.11 We are committed to ensuring that the structures in place in each area reflect what works best locally, rather than a "one size fits all" approach imposed from the centre. Our aim is devolution, not centralisation.

E.12 The draft Bill includes provisions to:

- require the major cities, and enable other areas, to review and propose their own changes to existing transport governance arrangements. The Secretary of State would be able to implement proposed changes through secondary legislation tailored to the needs of individual areas; and
- in all metropolitan areas outside London, update the existing powers and duties of the Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) and individual local authorities, and provide a stronger process for planning transport by means of an *Integrated Transport Strategy* and accompanying implementation plan.

Continuing to support the introduction of local road pricing as part of a package of transport improvements.

E.13 Rising congestion on our roads, particularly in our towns and cities, increases delay and frustration for motorists, and could have a significant impact on our future prosperity, environment and quality of life. We cannot simply build our way out of congestion, so we need to look at alternative ways of tackling it. In particular, we need to consider seriously the role that road pricing – as part of a package of measures including better public transport – could play.

E.14 This is why in 2005 we called for a national debate on road pricing. In the first instance, the Government is working with interested local authorities to bring forward local schemes as local solutions to local problems. We have said that we will make funding available from the Transport Innovation Fund for schemes in England that combine demand management, including road pricing, with improvements to local transport.

E.15 The draft Bill would support this strategy by:

- ensuring that local authorities who wish to develop local road pricing schemes are free to do so in a way that is best suited to local needs, within a clear framework of local accountability; while ensuring that schemes are consistent and interoperable, so as to avoid unnecessary costs and complexity for road users who need to interact with more than one scheme.

E.16 No decision has yet been taken on whether or not to introduce a national road pricing scheme. Neither existing legislation nor the provisions in the draft Bill would provide the powers that would be needed for such a scheme: separate legislation would be required if, in the future, a decision was made to introduce a national scheme. We have made clear that the earliest such a scheme could be introduced would be the middle of next decade, and there needs to be a full and informed public debate.

HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

E.17 Publication of the draft Bill is just the first step. We invite views from all interested parties on all aspects of the draft Bill and the accompanying documentation. The consultation closes on Friday 7 September, and Chapter 7 provides full details of how to respond.

E.18 In parallel with the public consultation process, the draft Bill is being made available to the House of Commons Transport Committee for Parliamentary pre-legislative scrutiny.

Details of the consultation and the Bill can be found at: -

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/localtransportbill/>

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