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promoting quality public transport.....

Matthew Moll
 Enhanced Bus Partnership Manager
 Public & Integrated Transport
 Lancashire County Council
 County Hall
 Preston

3rd November 2023

Dear Matthew

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT PASSENGER CHARTER

1. Introduction

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in North West England. We give below our comments on this consultation.

2. “Bus Companies Will Ensure That:”

2.1 We understand that around 95% of delays and cancellations to bus services are due to traffic congestion, roadworks and badly/illegally parked vehicles - none of those are down to bus operators. To meet the objectives of the proposed Bus Passengers Charter these causes of delays must be overcome by public bodies.

2.2 The council should bear the responsibility of ensuring that information about disruption from whatever cause is displayed prominently at bus stops and publicised widely by other means.

2.3 We endorse the clause that, if the last bus does not arrive within 20 minutes of the scheduled time, passengers should be able to use a taxi and claim their fare back. However, the reasons for this may be outside the bus operator's control e.g roadworks taking place, an accident, flooding or badly/illegal parked vehicles. In this situation there needs to be a mechanism for costs incurred by the bus operator to be compensated by those responsible for the disruption.

3. “The Council Will Ensure That :”

3.1 The Council should ensure that every bus stop is fully accessible with, as a minimum, a hard standing area with raised kerb where necessary, bus stop

pole & flag and current timetable displayed. Real time information should be provided as widely as possible.

3.2 Bus Stations must be kept safe, clean, well maintained, accessible to all, have public toilets open at all times buses are running and have up to date information available, including printed timetables available for all operators services.

3.3 Printed timetables should also be available to the public in all towns, including public buildings such as Tourist Information Offices and libraries. Information must be kept up to date.

3.4 The Council should also endeavour to minimise the effects of road works/ closures on bus schedules. As commented on above there needs to be a mechanism for any additional costs incurred by the bus operator in these situations to be compensated by those responsible for the disruption.

3.5 Traffic management issues are ever becoming more challenging. The council should ensure that traffic management measures are in place and enforced to ensure buses are not delayed by badly/illegally parked vehicles. These measures include bus stop clearways (which should be at every bus stop), parking and loading restrictions, clearly marked and enforced box junctions, traffic light priorities, bus lanes etc. Lancashire County Council should be credited for the bus priority measures already in place, but more are needed and they need to be enforced to avoid delays to buses.

3.6 There are examples in Lancaster of cars, etc using buses, taxis and access roads illegally and vehicles illegally parking on double yellow lines. Again enforcement is lacking.

4. If something goes wrong.

4.1 We welcome the advice on how to complain. In addition to the information in the Charter we recommend that there should be accessible information for passengers on buses and elsewhere not only how to complain but also how to appeal if the complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily. One simple step would be to provide “how to comment/ complain” information on board buses and at bus stations.

5. Other Matters

Coaches

5.1 These are an important part of the road based public transport system but are not referred to in the draft. For example, two Coach operators serve Lancaster with regular timetabled services, but there appears to be little or no mention of them on the Council’s public transport information.

5.2 We suggest that there is reference to information about regular timetabled coaches being available in the same way as bus timetables. Coach stops

need to be in appropriate locations and have space to allow the loading/unloading of luggage (often in underfloor lockers) and to enable wheelchair lifts to be deployed.

School Buses

5.3 One of our Directors has supplied the following narrative –

“Many Lancashire schools are served by buses, some are ‘normal’ buses which call at schools, some are contract buses, and some are timetabled services but for school pupils only. Bus stops at/outside schools need to be provided, must meet accessibility standards, must have bus stop clearway markings that are robustly enforced. For example, there is a lay-by for buses outside Carnforth High School but it is usually filled with parked cars (locals and parents).”

5.4 “The way the national bus information flows means that comprehensive information is available. As a result, anyone can look at eg Google Maps, Apple Maps, and easily see all the buses that serve every bus stop. While this is excellent, ‘closed door’ bus services do appear in this information with nothing to say these particular buses are not available to the general public. With the increased use of eg smartphones, this is becoming a significant problem which needs fixing.”

Scope of Charter

5.5 We note that the Charter includes Blackburn with Darwen Borough but not Blackpool Borough. Both boroughs are still part of geographical Lancashire.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely,

John

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary

