

Transport and Environment Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 15 January 2013

Proposals for Enhancing Bus Network Links to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

Item number	7.6
Report number	
Wards	All

Links

Coalition pledges	P19
Council outcomes	CO7 , CO8 , CO9 and CO10
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

Mark Turley

Director of Services for Communities

Contact: Ewan Horne, Senior Professional Officer

E-mail: ewan.horne@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 1469 3658

Executive summary

Proposals for Enhancing Bus Network Links to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

Summary

The Coalition has a pledge to encourage the improvement of public transport routes and times. The imminent completion of a new public transport link road provides the opportunity to significantly improve the bus network serving the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE).

The report proposes the provision of pump-priming funding for bus service 18 so that it can develop into a commercial bus service over a number of years.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- authorises an open tendering process to establish the cost of enhancing bus service 18; and
- notes that several options will be explored as part of the tendering process, in order to ensure best value for the public purse should Committee wish to award any contract.

Measures of success

Success will be measured by the economic viability of the new bus service at the end of the funding period stipulated in the contract tender. A further measure will be the improvement in accessibility to jobs, education and leisure opportunities brought about by the extension of bus service 18.

Financial impact

There are no financial impacts at this stage. It is hoped that the cost of enhancing service 18 can be accommodated within existing Transport budgets. Detailed costs will be known after completion of the tendering process, and will be reported to the Committee for decision.

It is not expected that any enhanced service would commence before the beginning of financial year 2013/2014.

Equalities impact

Successful implementation of the proposed new service will enhance bus network connectivity and make access to the RIE easier for many without access to a car and for those on low incomes.

Sustainability impact

The new service would reduce dependence on car transport, reduce journey times and improve accessibility for many, so improving sustainability.

Consultation and engagement

Consultation with the current operators of bus service 18 and with Community organisations will be carried out before any contract is implemented.

Background reading/external references

- Edinburgh City Local Plan (2010).
- Investment Zone Plan for South and East Edinburgh (2011).

Proposals for Enhancing Bus Network Links to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

1. Background

1.1 This report seeks:

- to inform Committee of possible changes to the bus network aimed at improving access to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE).
- the agreement of the Committee to a tendering exercise aimed at establishing the costs of implementing the changes.

2. Main report

- 2.1 Before the present RIE opened in 2003, Council officers worked closely with public transport operators to ensure that links to the site were as comprehensive as possible.
- 2.2 Bus services from parts of the city could still be improved, with journeys by public transport sometimes requiring use of two buses, which is time consuming and, for those paying single fares, more expensive.
- 2.3 The new Public Transport Link between the RIE and Greendykes was included in item 9.21 of the 2010 *Edinburgh City Local Plan*, and has been constructed as part of the *Investment Zone Plan for South and East Edinburgh* and provides an opportunity to create new bus links in the area. Enhanced public transport provision is a key element of stimulating future business and residential development in the Bio Quarter and Craigmillar Town Centre areas.
- 2.4 A map of the new Public Transport link is shown in Appendix 1. General access to the developments along the link is permitted, so only a short section is designated for buses, taxi and emergency vehicles only.
- 2.5 With this in mind, options for enhancing bus service provision using the new link have been assessed, and are discussed below.

Building on existing provision

- 2.6 A number of bus services, run by different operators, already serve the RIE. Several terminate at the RIE and some of these have the potential for diversion or extension to additional destination via the new Public Transport Link.
- 2.7 At present bus operators do not wish to divert or extend bus services on a commercial basis, due to the current low level of development along the route, and consequent low passenger demand.

Seed-corn funding

- 2.8 A new service would initially require external funding to establish and develop it to a point where it becomes commercially viable. This would increase the attractiveness of the areas to developers and potential investors and buyers, so contributing to the Council's aims in the Investment Plan.
- 2.9 Such an investment could be considerable; but could be similar to the type of declining funding over a period of years which featured in the Scottish Government's former Bus Route Development Grant (BRDG) scheme. This scheme established or extended a number of bus services in the city between 2005 and 2009.
- 2.10 The Council has used, more recently, its own funding in a similar way to develop other bus services in the city and in Queensferry.
- 2.11 Assessment of bus services, with potential to serve the new link, took account of existing requests for new links, the areas served by the existing services, service frequency and scope for development. It was not considered appropriate to develop a completely new stand-alone service.
- 2.12 In discussion with bus operators, it emerged that service 18 (Gyle-Wester Hailes-Colinton-Fairmilehead-Gilmerton-RIE) was a likely candidate.
- 2.13 Service 18 currently comprises commercial unsubsidised journeys operated by Lothian Buses at morning and evening peak times (Monday to Friday) with the remainder of the timetable operated by First under contract to the Council. The route operates hourly, from around 0700 to 2000, seven days a week.
- 2.14 The current contract with First covers operation of the service Monday – Friday off-peak, Saturday and Sunday, at a cost of £1,530 per week. The contract is due to run until 26 July 2016.
- 2.15 An extension of this service to Fort Kinnaird, via the new Public Transport Link, possibly combined with enhanced frequency, would provide a new bus link for residents in the south of the city. Links to East Lothian would also be enhanced, further improving accessibility to employment, education opportunities and to Queen Margaret College in particular.

Procurement issues

- 2.16 The existing combination of commercial and subsidised journeys in the timetable and the wish to enhance provision requires a new approach to the procurement of the service.
- 2.17 Lothian Buses has indicated the company's agreement to the Council offering the entire timetable, including those journeys currently operated commercially by the company, to the open market as a complete package, so that potential costs can be established.
- 2.18 Further, Lothian Buses has indicated that, should the company be unsuccessful in gaining the contract, no obstacle would be placed in the way of the successful tenderer operating the whole timetable.
- 2.19 First has indicated the company's willingness to participate in a new open tendering process designed to extend the service to Fort Kinnaird and to simplify the operational timetable.
- 2.20 This would require serving notice on First to end the existing contract at a suitable time to allow any new contract to commence.
- 2.21 It is therefore proposed to offer service 18 to the market in an open tendering process, in order to establish the costs of extending and enhancing the service.
- 2.22 It is proposed that a number of tender options be offered, to include route extensions to Fort Kinnaird and elsewhere, along with options to enhance the service frequency in a number of ways.
- 2.23 A further report detailing the outcomes of this tendering process will be submitted to Committee in due course.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- authorises an open tendering process to establish the cost of enhancing bus service 18; and
 - notes that several options will be explored as part of the tendering process, in order to ensure best value for the public purse should Committee wish to award any contract.

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Director of Services for Communities

Links

Coalition pledges	P19 – Keep Lothian Buses in public hands and encourage the improvement of routes and times
Council outcomes	CO7 – Edinburgh draws new investment in development and regeneration CO8 – Edinburgh’s economy creates and sustains job opportunities CO9 – Edinburgh residents are able to access job opportunities CO10 – Improved health and reduced inequalities
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 – Edinburgh’s economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all
Appendices	1 – Plan of Bus Link

Appendix: 1 Plan of Bus Link

