

Transport and Environment Committee

10am, Tuesday, 13 January 2015

Assessing Supported Bus Services

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| Item number | 7.1 |
| Report number | |
| Executive/routine | |
| Wards | |

Executive summary

The Council spends around £1.3 million per annum on supporting a range of bus services across the city. A growing demand for supported services, increasing costs for bus operators and pressure on Council budgets results in a need to prioritise service provision and improve service efficiency.

This report seeks approval for a proposed set of criteria to evaluate supported bus services and develop a methodology that will assess both value for money and non-financial benefits.

Links

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Coalition pledges | |
| Council outcomes | CO9 , CO10 , CO22 |
| Single Outcome Agreement | SO1 |

Assessing Supported Bus Services

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - 1.1.1 approves the proposed criteria to be used in the assessment;
 - 1.1.2 approves the development and application of an assessment methodology that will evaluate both value for money and the social, economic and transport related benefits provided by supported bus services; and
 - 1.1.3 notes the intention to present the outcomes of the assessment to this Committee at its meeting on 17 March 2015.

Background

- 2.1 The Council's Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2014–2019, approved by Committee on 14 January 2014, includes policy **PubTrans3**: "The Council will investigate a budget proposal for increasing funding for supported bus services; to maintain or enhance bus services where commercial provision is not viable, or low frequency, allied to a package of changes eg pump-priming new services".
- 2.2 The Council's Public and Accessible Transport Action Plan (PATAP), approved by Committee on 27 August 2013, requires officers to "Review the methodology for prioritising supported services, and identify improvements in procurement processes" (Action B11).
- 2.3 The Council spends around £1.3 million per annum on supporting a range of bus services across the city. This financial support currently extends to 17 separate services, most are partially funded to increase frequencies and extend operating hours and five are contributions to cross boundary services managed by neighbouring authorities.
- 2.4 Supported services have evolved over many years, often in response to a demand from communities where commercial services are perceived as not meeting local needs or where commercial services have been withdrawn or reduced.

- 2.5 A number of commercial services in and around the city have been lost in recent years. Recent tenders for supported services have returned significantly increased prices for the same level of service, reflecting increased running costs. This suggests that some commercial services are finding the operating environment difficult and demand for financially supported services is likely to rise.
- 2.6 The Council should therefore prioritise service provision to ensure that value for money is being provided.

Main report

Proposed Draft Assessment Criteria

- 3.1 A broad set of criteria have been developed to form the basis of the assessment of supported bus services. The proposed criteria are derived from four key themes based on the Council's Transport Vision, Local Transport Strategy and the Public and Accessible Transport Action Plan:
- Enhancing Access and Social Inclusion.
 - Protecting the Environment.
 - Reducing Congestion.
 - Developing the Economy.
- 3.2 Previous work, from 2009, on developing an assessment methodology as part of proposed supported bus service review, plus discussions with the Association and Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) and other local authorities which have been through similar exercises, have also been taken into account in developing the proposed criteria (Table1).

| Table 1 Proposed Criteria |
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| Enhancing Access and Social Inclusion |
| Operational service days and frequency - Monday to Friday, weekends and evenings |
| Isolation – whether there are alternative public transport services available (bus, tram and rail) in the locality and how frequent and distance to these services are. |
| Car ownership - proportion of households with no car available within the catchment area of the service. |
| Access for older and disabled people - number of older people (over 65) and disabled persons served and/or likely to be served by the service. |
| Service usage – existing number of passengers and/or estimated number of passenger by the service. |
| Social deprivation - socio-economic characteristics of the wards served by the service. |
| Protecting the Environment and Reducing Congestion |
| Impacts on carbon emissions - . Council specifies minimum vehicle standards in contracts, therefore potential benefits where routes pass through Air Quality Management Areas or congestion hotspots. |
| Function of service subsidy - whether the subsidy is for a conventional stand alone bus service, frequency enhancement or route extension. |
| Developing the Economy |
| Journey purpose - the principal purpose of the bus service and how it is used eg to provide access to employment, education, health, etc. |
| Average subsidy per passenger. |

- 3.3 Further work is being undertaken by a specialist independent transport consultant (commissioned through Scotland Excel Framework) to:
- provide a framework and a methodology for assessing supported bus services, including non-monetary benefits, using the proposed criteria;
 - consult key users and stakeholders whilst undertaking this work;
 - assess the existing supported bus services; and
 - produce a report on the outcome of the assessment with recommendations.

- 3.4 This work when completed will form the basis of a report to this Committee at its meeting on 17 March 2015.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The measure of success will be the development of a framework and a tool for assessing supported bus services.

Financial impact

- 5.1 A total of £25,000, has been set aside within the annual Transport budget (2014/15 financial year) for a study, to be undertaken by an independent transport consultancy, to develop a framework and a tool for appraising supported bus services.
- 5.2 The Council invests approximately £1.3 million in supported bus services. There is a proposal within the draft 2015-16 budget to realise a saving of £200,000 through a review of supported services.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The development of clear criteria and a methodology for assessing supported bus services will enable the Council to ensure that the services it supports are in line with its strategic transport objectives and represent value for money.
- 6.2 Any delay in assessing supported bus services may have an impact on the re-procurement of four contracts for supported services which are due to expire in 2015.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The outcomes of this report in relation of the ten areas of rights and the delivery of the three Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) have been considered. The Council's Equalities and Rights Impact Assessment Record will be kept updated and referenced throughout the project and consultation processes to ensure the project meets the Council's requirements in relation to Public Sector Equalities duties.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered. Any changes (increase and decrease) to the supported public transport provision are likely to affect these three elements. Therefore planned works will take into consideration these elements to minimise the negative impacts whilst seeking to increase.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) members were asked about the assessment criteria and methodology used in their local authorities. Edinburgh's considered criteria and methodology was discussed on 5 September 2014 at the ATCO Scotland meeting.
- 9.2 This report seeks further consultation with the key users and stakeholders to finalise a set of draft criteria to be used in the development of a methodology and a tool for assessing Supported Bus Services.

Background reading/external references

Finalising a set of criteria for assessing Supported Bus Services and developing a PT-PAMS deliver on the following sustainable development policies:

[Transport 2030 Vision](#)

[Local Transport Strategy](#)

[Public and Accessible Transport Action Plan](#)

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Links

Coalition pledges

Council outcomes **CO9** - Edinburgh residents are able to access job opportunities
CO10 - Improved health and reduced inequalities
CO22 - Moving efficiently – Edinburgh has a transport system that improves connectivity and is green, healthy and accessible

Single Outcome Agreement **SO1** - Edinburgh's Economy Delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all

Appendices None