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By email: bus.bill@scottish.parliament.uk

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Dear Mr Gray

BUS REGULATION (SCOTLAND) BILL

I am writing on behalf of East Lothian Council in response to your consultation on proposals for a Bus Regulation (Scotland) Bill. This response sets out the considered views of relevant Council officers and follows the order and format of the questions in your paper.

1. Do you support the general aim of the proposed Bill? Please indicate "yes/no/undecided" and explain the reasons for your response.

The general aim of the Bill is to be commended. There may also be more scope to explore better use of current legislation. Additionally, if the Bill could be expanded to deal with other forms of transport then it could include the following:

- Roads infrastructure
 - Bus lanes
 - Guided roadways
 - Facilities suitable for streetcar buses/trams
 - Cycle ways separate from the road (where possible) similar to Holland /Germany.
 - Transport Hubs/interchanges
 - Increase in, and better positioning of, Park & Rides
- Rail Network
 - Integration/ connecting of services
- Tram ways/Light rail
 - Better use of inter & outer circle lines to enhance commuting
- Air Travel
 - Better connection links to airports
- Ferry Travel
 - Better connection by public services

2. What would be the main practical advantages of the legislation proposed? What would be the disadvantages?

- The main advantage, as officers see it, would be the ability to include non-commercial routes within a package (provided appropriate funding is available).
- Possible disadvantages include:
 - The cost to Local Authorities would inevitably increase to allow management of the proposal.
 - Smaller commercial operators may not have sufficient resources to tender for grouped lots which include a number of services.

3. In what ways do you envisage reregulation being used to improve bus services?

Legislation to encourage consistency could improve the level of service to the public. There is a perception that different operators work to different standards of quality.

4. How can community transport be better utilised to serve local communities and particularly low passenger volume routes?

Officers would suggest a mapping exercise across all local authorities to find out what community transport resources are available, and then development of a system to best use the resource which officers think may well be currently under-utilised.

5. Do you agree that the Traffic Commissioner should be able to impose greater financial penalties on operators who a) fail to meet the terms of the franchise or b) walk away from the franchise altogether?

This is a two-edged sword. An increase in financial penalties might be seen to tend to improve the service provided, but then again might also deter some smaller operators from submitting prices for the franchise. The recent work carried out by the Traffic Commissioner has shown that operators require to be more proactive in their approach. It does not seem that the Commissioner uses the powers already available to their most punitive extent.

6. What is your assessment of the likely financial implications of the proposed Bill to you or your organisation? What other significant financial implications are likely to arise?

There would need to be a substantial increase in resource within the Council to facilitate the current proposal, particularly in staffing. Equipment, infrastructure and software would also have to be purchased which is likely to have a substantial financial impact. For example, if the Council were to use its bus fleet to fill any gaps in provision, we would expect to have to buy more vehicles and to equip our vehicles (and staff) with the capacity to handle cash.

7. Is the proposed Bill likely to have any substantial positive or negative implications for equality? If it is likely to have a substantial negative implication, how might this be minimised or avoided?

- This would depend on the franchises that were put together and whether any of the companies wishing to participate had the required resources to improve/maintain the existing level of service.
- We cannot see any immediate concerns for equalities in the proposals as written. Any expansion of services which increases accessibility is a positive thing for all groups, particularly young people, older people and those with disabilities. The paper places a positive emphasis on the role of transport in tackling social isolation.
- However, we would like to make you aware of representations from the East Lothian Youth Council. They feel that it is unfair that all 60+ have free travel but young people with no income often cannot get the funds for journeys to interviews/training and for general mobility.

8. Do you have any other comment or suggestion that is relevant to the need for or detail of this Bill?

8.1 As the vast majority of public transport routes are cross-border (between local authority areas) the Regional Transport Partnerships must have a large part to play in the implementation of any proposal.

8.2 Any review of legislation needs to be sensitive to small and local businesses.

I hope you find these comments helpful.

Yours sincerely



ANGELA LEITCH
Chief Executive