**The Buses Bill: Note for PTIC**

**Background**

At the last PTIC meeting the DfT’s Bus Reform Workshops were discussed and I undertook to prepare a note for submission to the DfT on the importance of maintaining a strong statutory framework to allow the continued delivery of high quality passenger information and electronic ticketing. Peter Stoner put together a useful background note that has been separately circulated.

**The Submission**

In the event, as the consultation period had closed and DfT were under pressure to complete their work ready for the Parliamentary Draughtsmen, rather than the intended letter on behalf of PTIC the opportunity was taken of a meeting between CILT and Graham Pendlebury, Director of Local Transport at DfT, to table a short paper and elaborate briefly on the key points. The paper is appended.

**The Bill**

The Bill could be introduced into Parliament as early as March although issues still appear to remain between the Treasury (the Chancellor of the Exchequer has taken a personal interest in view of his public commitments) and the Department of Transport which is anxious to avoid the disruption that could result from a rapid swing towards re-regulation. The consensus of most interested observers is that the Bill is unlikely to appear before Easter.

From the viewpoint of PTIC it appears that DfT has accepted most of the points made to it. At the UK Bus Summit on 11th February the responsible Minister, Andrew Jones MP, said, *inter alia*:

……. In preparing this bill, we have one clear aim, which is this: to increase bus passenger numbers.

……. nor does the bill impose wholesale re-regulation. Instead, the Buses Bill is an enabling bill.

……. And just as in London, passengers right across the country want Oyster-style ticketing, better acess to information about timetables, better information on fares before they travel, and real-time data about when the bus is going to arrive at their stop.

……. **What the bill will include — open data**

So, first, our bill will address passengers’ need for better information.

It is in everyone’s interests for people to know as much as possible about the bus services in their area. So our proposal is that all operators will be required to make data about routes, fares and times open and accessible. *(JDC underlining)*

It will allow app makers to develop products that passengers can use to plan their journeys, and give people the confidence to leave the car at home and take the bus instead.

The full text of the Minister’s speech can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-buses-bill>.

Subsequent conversations suggest that DfT officials see that electronic bus service registration will be mandatory but that this will not necessarily be through VOSA systems, options mentioned include giving agency rights to traveline for example with a preference that contractors to maintain the service database should be selected competitively.

**What Now?**

So far, so good, but nothing is set in stone. We need to see the Bill itself and prepare briefing which suppliers in particular can send to their local MPs and also to MPs and Peers on the Committees appointed to scrutinise the Bill. Whilst things look encouraging, the devil is in the detail. Even if there may be no need for amendment it is still good for Parliamentarians to quote evidence in support, whilst if we see the need for improvement we need to convince a majority on the Committee to argue for changes if the Government (through the DfT) does not accept the need and introduce its own amendments. As it will be an enabling bill one issue will be to ensure that there is a uniform requirement to comply with minimum registration particulars.

John Carr, 12 February 2016

**Data and Passenger Information**

**Paragraphs 4.54 to 4.56, 4.57 to 4.68 and 4.69 to 4.72**:

This section of the Background Document covers a number of related issues and we have chosen to present an encompassing response that has also had the benefit of input from the Public Transport Information Coordination Group (appended). UK ICT and consultancy businesses have led development of standards for service description, electronic passenger information and ticketing and the Buses Bill gives the opportunity to reinforce this competitive advantage.

* + **Bus Service Registration**:

We believe that electronic service registration for all services should be expedited with an early cut-off date for ending paper registration, e.g. 31st December 2016.

To assist this, the DfT may need to ensure the availability of an online portal and low-cost software interface for small operators to move to electronic registration at low cost; where small could be defined in terms of their number of licensed vehicles or concurrently registered services. This assistance for small operators would be analogous to the free payroll software that HMRC has made available to small employers to assist with the move to real-time National Insurance and Income Tax submissions.
We stress that there will need to be clarity for each market model that the legislation would allow an LTA to introduce as to whether it is the responsibility of the *promote*r or of the *operator* to register each bus service in the controlled market area taking care to distinguish between those services operated under the authority-led *franchise* arrangement and those services operating under a permit.

* + **Service Specification Information:**
	We endorse the application of open data principles to bus service registrations.
	+ **Fares Information:**
	The Traffic Commissioner could introduce a non-compulsory opportunity for service providers to register fares in a standardised data form; but for such ‘standardised form’ to allow for the diversity of tariff structures in existence, e.g. stage-based and zonal, and per-journey and period tickets. In such a way, journey planning services such as Traveline could access the fares data for services and make them available to passengers. While being non-compulsory, i.e. the fields could be left blank when submitting the service registration, we believe that customer demand for such information would encourage providers to populate these data fields.
	+ **Service Delivery Information:**

We endorse the application of open data principles to data describing bus service operation, e.g. real-time running data. We suggest that DfT might allay service operators’ fears regarding prosecution for non-compliance with their registration by encouraging the wide-spread roll-out of Punctuality Improvement Partnerships and a fair method for allocation of responsibility for delays between infrastructure authority (including allowance for traffic congestion) and service operator.