

## ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: PUBLIC TRANSPORT UPDATE

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

**Abstract: This report updates Committee on local bus service changes, local bus service provision over the Christmas and New Year holiday period and progress made to date in implementing the new National Travel Arrangements for the Blind.**

**1 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee -

- 1 Welcome the revised local bus service provision proposed over the Christmas and New Year holiday period and note that no additional contracted services are required.
- 2 Note the new National Travel Arrangements for the Blind and the progress made to date in implementing these.
- 3 Homologate the award by the Director of Planning and Transport of a de-minimis contract to Strathtay Scottish Ltd. for the extension of a Dundee to Monifieth journey on Friday evenings only to continue to Newbigging, Monikie, Wellbank and Kellas. This meets requests received from Monikie Community Council for such a service.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This report updates Members of the proposed local bus service provision over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. The new National Travel Arrangements for the Blind to be introduced on 1 December 1999 are also outlined. In addition, the extension of an existing evening journey operating between Dundee and Monifieth to also serve Newbigging, Monikie, Wellbank and Kellas is reported.

**3 CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR SERVICES**

- 3.1 Members will recall that at the last meeting of this Committee on 14 October 1999, an initial indication of the provision of commercial local bus services over the Christmas and New Year holiday period was reported. Further discussions have since taken place with Strathtay Scottish Ltd., the major operator in Angus, to determine their proposed level of service provision. The Council have now been informed that the Company will operate as follows:

- |                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| • Friday 24 December 1999   | Normal service   |
| • Saturday 25 December 1999 | No service       |
| • Sunday 26 December 1999   | Sunday service   |
| • Monday 27 December 1999   | Saturday service |

• Tuesday 28 December 1999	Normal service
• Wednesday 29 December 1999	Normal service
• Thursday 30 December 1999	Normal service
• Friday 31 December 1999	Saturday service#
• Saturday 1 January 2000	No service
• Sunday 2 January 2000	Sunday service
• Monday 3 January 2000	Saturday service
• Tuesday 4 January 2000	Normal service

# Buses will cease operation earlier than normal and will return to depot for approximately 10.00 p.m.

3.2 The decision by Strathtay Scottish Ltd. to provide a high level of service over the Christmas and New Year holiday period is welcomed. The early termination of services on 31 December 1999 will be common practice with that of other operators throughout Scotland. Previous statistics have shown that evening services are typically very little used on 31 December and therefore this is not regarded as a major problem. On the basis of these revised proposals it is not the Council's intention to provide any additional services over the Christmas and New Year period.

3.3 The Council will produce an information leaflet for distribution to the public to inform them of the service provision throughout Angus over this period.

#### 4 NATIONAL TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE BLIND

4.1 It was reported at the last meeting of this Committee on 14 October 1999 that the proposed date for the introduction of the new National Travel Arrangements for the Blind was 1 December 1999 (Report 1042/99 refers). The Council has subsequently received details of the new arrangements and confirmation of this introduction date.

4.2 This Committee endorsed the new National Travel Arrangements for the Blind on 28 January 1999 (Report 90/99 refers). The basis of the arrangements are:

- Local authorities will administer the issue of a standardised concessionary pass for the blind.
- Operators will participate in the Arrangement on a voluntary basis to provide free national travel throughout Scotland. In addition, travel on ScotRail services to Carlisle will also be included.
- Local authorities will provide an agreed level of financial support for three years to operators for their participation in the Arrangement.

4.3 The Council has now placed an order for new standardised travel passes for issue to the Blind. CoSLA supplied Authorities with details of the printer to be used to supply these passes and all Authorities have to make their purchase from that supplier. The passes will cost £260 and are due for delivery by 24 November 1999. Arrangements are currently being made for the issue of these passes to existing blind passholders. CoSLA acknowledge that it will be difficult for Authorities to meet the start date of 1 December 1999 for the issue of passes due to the tight timescales involved. Councils are however urged to use their best endeavours to implement the new arrangements

from that date or as soon as possible thereafter. These National Travel passes will be issued free of charge and will be valid until 30 November 2002.

- 4.4 The new arrangements require each Authority to agree with their Operators a method of reimbursement. This is to be based on the expenditure in relation to travel for Blind Persons in the 1998/99 financial year with increases index linked to take account of inflation. The Council has negotiated an agreement with the major operators and has now sent details to all operators for their agreement. The reimbursement will take place as follows:
- Scheme B passes (Free Travel) are currently issued to Blind persons and to Severely Disabled persons. Severely disabled persons will continue to use these passes however Blind persons will be re-issued with a National Blind pass. Journeys undertaken on the National Blind passes need not be recorded, if they are recorded then operators must record usage separately from the Scheme B (severely disabled) passes.
  - In order to ensure that neither Angus Council nor the operators are worse off through the introduction of the new National Blind Travel Concession Arrangements, Angus Council has agreed to pay operators in line with their Scheme B claims for 1998/99. These payments for 1998/99 will form the base budget for the Arrangement, they will be index linked to RPI to account for inflation and will be guaranteed at this level for three years. The RPI figure will be determined by a Management Group comprising of representatives from CoSLA, Local Authorities and the National League for the Blind, in addition the Scottish Executive will have observer status. In practice this means that operators will submit claims for Scheme B (severely disabled) passenger usage each month/quarter together with their claims for reimbursement from the other Concessionary Travel Schemes. The Council will make up any shortfall between these claims and the previous Scheme B payments to each operator to the 1998/99 base budget payments that will be increased in line with RPI. It should be noted however that should there be a substantial change in local bus service provision by an operator then both parties would reserve the right to re-negotiate the repayments.
  - Should any operators not currently claiming concessionary travel reimbursement or any new operators commence local bus service operation in Angus submit claims then payment arrangements will have to be negotiated with these companies. It should be noted that at the present time that no claims have ever been submitted to Angus Council by Scottish CityLink, National Express, Bluebird Buses Ltd., Alexander Melville, M W Nicoll or Royal Mail (Postbus) all of these companies currently operating local bus services within Angus.
- 4.5 The arrangement for reimbursement to rail companies has been agreed through CoSLA. The Authority will pay ScotRail £5.40 for each of the existing Blind passholders. Preliminary negotiations have taken place with ScotRail to amend the existing contract for travel concession reimbursement for the free concessionary travel passholders which in the case of ScotRail includes Scheme A (Disabled) passholders, Scheme B (Blind and Severely Disabled) passholders and Taxicard holders. The results of these negotiations will be reported back to a future meeting of this Committee.

## **5 SERVICE 79A : DUNDEE - MONIKIE CIRCULAR**

- 5.1 Requests have been received from Monikie Community Council for the provision of an evening journey from Dundee to Monikie on Friday nights at approximately 11.00 p.m. This request was investigated and it was considered that it could be met by extending an existing commercial Strathtay Scottish Ltd. journey operating at 11.05 p.m. from Dundee to Monifieth to continue to Newbigging, Monikie, Luckyslap, Wellbank, Kellas then returning to Monifieth.
- 5.2 The extension of this existing journey under the de-minimis provisions has been identified as the most cost-effective means of meeting this request. The cost per Friday of operation is £36.00, which can be met from the Council's Rural Transport Grant allocation of £124,000 for 1999/2000. The contract will commence on 7 January 2000 and is awarded on two months notice of termination.

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The introduction of the new National Travel Arrangements for the Blind from 1 December 1999 will not result in any increase in payments to local bus service operators. Members should however note that some operators do not currently claim Concessionary Travel reimbursement and the new Arrangements may result in these companies reconsidering their position.
- 6.2 CoSLA has agreed the reimbursement arrangements to ScotRail of £5.40 per current Blind passholder. Members were informed at the previous meeting of this Committee on 14 October 1999 that this will result in an increase in payments to ScotRail of approximately £1200 per annum. This figure cannot however be confirmed until the negotiations on reimbursement for the remaining free travel passholders travelling within Angus and to/from Dundee are concluded. These additional costs to ScotRail together with all printing and administration costs in relation to the issue of the new National Travel Passes will be met from the Planning and Transport Revenue Budget for 1999/2000.
- 6.3 The extension of an existing journey on Friday evenings between Dundee and Monifieth to Newbigging, Monikie, Luckyslap, Wellbank, Kellas to meet requests from Monikie Community Council will result in additional costs of £468 in 1999/2000. This cost will be met from the Council's Rural Transport Grant allocation of £124,000 for 1999/2000.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The local bus network continues to be kept under review and where budgetary provision allows additional services are provided where public demand has been established. New National agreements such as that for Blind Travel are welcomed and these are processed and negotiated with operators to meet the timescales set.

**NOTE**

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/LEM/IAL  
12 November 1999

Alex Anderson  
Director of Planning and Transport

