

# 7a The Cambridgeshire Bus Information Strategy

## Background

Improved public transport information is seen as one of the key elements in promoting integrated and sustainable transport at all levels of Government. At a national level, the Government White Paper on integrated transport notes that:

“By giving buses greater priority and improving information and networks, we can encourage more people to use buses...”

Whilst the ‘daughter’ document on buses states:

“Good timetable information is a foundation stone of successful public transport, nationally and locally.”

As a result of this commitment, the Government established legislation on improving bus information through the Transport Act 2000. Under the Act, transport authorities are empowered to set standards for information provided by bus operators. Where information falls short of those standards, powers are given to recoup reasonable costs incurred in raising standards to the required level.

The Cambridgeshire Bus Strategy acknowledges the need to provide high quality and accurate information systems. However, the quality and accuracy of information provision varies across the County, from very good to non-existent. There is, therefore, considerable scope to improve information on bus services using both conventional and high-tech methods.

Building on the work that we have done in delivering our part of PTI 2000 and in keeping with our responsibilities under the Transport Act 2000, we have now developed a bus information strategy. This strategy envisages a two-staged approach to the delivery of an improved bus information.

- Stage 1 will set a minimum standard for all bus information including the provision of paper information – both in the form of booklets and timetables at stops and the rolling out of a programme of real time bus information along all of the corridors in the county.
- Stage 2 looks to develop this approach further, introducing proper branding of services to provide a common feel to county bus service.

We will use the corridor improvements proposed as part of our bus strategy to pilot innovative forms of information prior to introducing Stage 2 of the strategy and then roll out the successful elements of this on a county wide basis.

## Stage 1

**(Initiatives to be carried out within the first 24 months of the Strategy’s adoption)**

There is an immediate need to create a uniform set of standards for all bus information, based upon the examples of existing good practice. It is envisaged that most of these can be implemented within 12 months of formal adoption of the Strategy. This alone will lead to a step-change in the quality of bus information. Key tasks for Stage 1 include:

- providing clear guidance on information provision, detailing required standards and where responsibility for information provision lies (note that the County Council will work with operators to achieve a set standard for bus stop information. Where standards are not met, the County Council will make the necessary improvements and recoup reasonable costs from the operator concerned)
- ensuring that arrangements for the provision of Countywide and regional information, such as Traveline, are set on a solid financial footing (all bus operators will be required to fully participate in this scheme. Each operator is expected to meet the costs attributed to it by Traveline, but where an operator refuses to do so, the Council will pay for those costs on its behalf, and recover such sums with the addition of an administrative charge)
- taking full advantage of lessons learned in implementing successful information-based projects
- establishing a timetable for the second stage of the Strategy, and

Further details of Stage 1 are reported below.

## Stage 2

**(To run concurrently with Stage 1, anticipated completion within 5 years)**

Beyond the short-term (Stage 1) imperative, the Strategy also needs to establish a framework for achieving further improvements in the quality of bus information, taking into account Bus Strategy objectives for new high quality services along corridors and the potential for new technologies, such as real time information. Key tasks for Stage 2 include:

- setting a framework for the implementation of high quality information along the main public transport corridors
- developing a mobility management centre, allowing a single point of contact for all transport issues
- developing user friendly timetables (the potential for London Tube style maps and talking timetables will be explored), and
- establishing accurate and reliable electronic information (including real time information, SMS technology, web-based inter-active journey planning and electronic I-boards at transport hubs).

As an early part of Stage 2, the County Council is aiming to pilot real time information on the Cambridge to St Neots corridor (i.e. within 12 months of the Strategy’s formal adoption).

## Quality corridors and Quality Partnerships

It is likely, in implementing the Bus Strategy, that Quality Partnerships (QPs) will be introduced along the transport corridors. The exact nature of these partnerships will be determined on a route-by-route basis in consultation with the bus companies, but they may ultimately be a mixture of statutory

and informal partnerships. As part of the development of these routes, it is intended that the measures set out in the Bus Information Strategy will serve as the base for discussions, and information along QP routes will be above this base.

Over time it is envisaged that certain information improvements, piloted along QP routes in particular, will form the basis of revisions to the Bus Information Strategy. This is in keeping with the Transport Act requirement that bus information should be reviewed from time to time, and will help to ensure a continuous cycle of improvement is achieved. It is intended that this revision will be undertaken within the next five years and will move towards a more co-ordinated approach to marketing public transport in the County.

## Specifications for Stage 1 of the Cambridgeshire Bus Information Strategy

### Note

These notes form an initial draft only for the specifications of the main part of the Bus Information Strategy. As such, they are liable to change prior to the finalisation of the Strategy.

### Consistency of information

The telephone number of the Traveline (0870 608 2 608) must be shown on all information, along with the web address (<http://www.traveline.org.uk/>).

All stops in the County have been mapped and given a unique name as part of the Government's Public Transport Information initiative. All operators will use these names in all descriptions of the stop to give users a consistent and easily understood identity for all bus stops.

Where travel concessions are available, full details must be shown on the vehicle and in fare information.

### Paper information (booklets etc)

#### Timetable booklets and leaflet – general

Every bus company operating bus services stopping in Cambridgeshire must provide a booklet covering all of their services in the County and an individual leaflet for every route.

Booklets and leaflets must be at least A5 or A4 size (folded as appropriate), with a minimum type size of 8-point and should be in the conventional matrix format, or other if agreed by Cambridgeshire County Council. Large print timetables (14-point) must also be made available on request.

Each timetable must contain the following.

- The unique service name or number, the start and end points of the route and the date which the timetable came into effect. For leaflets giving details of specific services, this must be shown on the front cover.
- Timings for all major stopping points along the route, showing interchanges with other public transport services.
- Days and dates of operation.
- The availability of facilities for disabled travellers, including the availability of large print timetables and information on the use of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- The head office address for the operator, telephone number, web address (if available) and the person or position of the person to whom complaints should be addressed.

- The prices and validity of all relevant bus passes.
- A clear indication of which, if any, services are supported by the County Council.

#### Timetable booklets and leaflet – availability

Booklets and leaflets are to be made available, free of charge, to the public on request and at the following destinations (subject to the agreement of the vendor):

- railway stations
- bus stations
- public libraries
- tourist information centres
- village shops and/or post offices along the route(s) (minimum one outlet per parish where they exist)
- Rural Transport Partnership offices and community transport offices
- Parish Council offices
- County Council and District Council offices
- universities
- 6th Form colleges
- technical colleges, and
- schools.

The County Council can make addresses of these outlets available to operators on request.

In addition to the above, sufficient copies of leaflets covering particular routes should also be made available to major local employers at their request or at the request of the County Council.

#### “How to get there” leaflets for major destinations

From time to time, the Council may choose to designate particular major destinations, such as hospitals and places of interest as requiring an individual ‘how to get there’ type leaflet. Bus companies operating services to these key destinations will be required to produce leaflets describing services to the site. These leaflets must be in accordance with the specifications given above.

Responsibility for producing and distributing these leaflets will lie with the operator running services to the destination. For destinations served by more than one operator, the County Council or its agents will produce a leaflet and will reclaim the costs of doing so from the bus companies serving the destination on a pro rata basis.

#### Notification of timetable and fare changes

Advance notice of any timetable changes must be given at least 2 weeks in advance of the change. Notices must be posted on all stops along the affected route and a poster displayed in all buses on the route, giving the contact number where full details can be obtained.

From one week before the change, full timetables must be made available on all buses along the route and at the outlets detailed above.

Changes to fares must be notified to the public at least one week in advance, by means of notices on all vehicles, giving a telephone number where further information can be obtained.

## Countywide map

The Council will produce a county map illustrating the routes of all local bus services at least once a year.

## Information at bus stops

### Infrastructure

Paper displays for all services should be laminated and displayed in a watertight case at every recognised stop along a route.

Bus stop flags complying with Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1994 must be fitted if they are not already in place. The flag should show the name of the stop, telephone numbers for travel enquiries and should incorporate signing to indicate the direction of buses from that point.

All stops must carry a message asking passengers to report missing timetables or damage to the display.

Major bus stops in town or city centres will be fitted with large frames to display maps of the surrounding area.

### Timetable information at bus stops (paper)

Departure times must be displayed at every boarding point along the route, indicating service identity of all buses serving that point, a general overview of the route followed, and the date the service came into operation.

Precise times will be used except where the service frequency is 15 minutes or less, when frequency should be used.

Information for all services, including Council supported services, should be included within the same display(s) wherever possible. Where competing services are operated using common stops, information on these should be grouped close to one another to enable easy comparison. In general, where more than one company uses the same stop, the companies should liaise with one another to ensure that all information is displayed to the best effect. The company owning the stop may make a reasonable charge either to other bus companies using the stop or (in the event of the service being a Council supported service) to the County Council for the use of the display.

At its discretion, the County Council may choose to set up and maintain information at certain shared stops and will recoup the costs of doing this from the companies using the stop.

### Information on buses

Every vehicle must display its service identity and destination – the letters must be at least 125mm high and the numbers at least 200mm high. Where possible they should be illuminated in darkness.

Operators must make available on each bus, information on timetables, leaflets and details of passes including cost and validity that is relevant to the service being operated.

A comprehensive fare table for the whole route must be carried on every vehicle and be available for inspection on request.

### Telephone information

All bus operators will fully participate in Traveline. Each operator is expected to meet the costs attributed to it by Traveline, but where an operator refuses to do so, the Council will pay for those costs on its behalf, and recover such sums with the addition of an administrative charge.

Operators who choose to do so may provide their own telephone enquiry system, but this must be in addition to Traveline and not as an alternative.

## Electronic information

Information boards or electronic I-boards showing all services from a particular stop or area will be made available in town and city centres.

Any bus operator maintaining a web site should include a link to the County Council site, Traveline site and other transport sites as requested by the County Council.

### Other

Where a service disruption is known in advance, the operator will be expected to have emergency timetables and/or stopping points arranged and where the period of disruption is expected to be lengthy, to publicise full details of any alterations in place.

Drivers should be trained in customer care for their role in improved provision of information, and of informing passengers of disruption.

The County Council will provide maps at town and city centres, showing the whereabouts of bus stops, route maps of available services and an index of places served. Bus operators should co-operate with the County Council in the display of public transport promotional material on board buses and at company offices.

### Monitoring and enforcement

The County Council will undertake monitoring of bus information as part of its usual procedures. Where a bus company is found not to be meeting the requirements of the criteria contained in this document, the Council will draw these deficiencies to the attention of the relevant company. In the event of a company still failing to meet these requirements, the County Council or its agents will take whatever action it deems necessary to address these shortcomings, up to and including providing the information on behalf of the company. In this event, the Council will use its statutory powers to recoup the costs, including an administrative charge, of any such action from the bus company.

