

***Supported Bus Network Reduction***  
**Initial Impact Appraisal**

**This appraisal was included in the MTFP report to Cabinet 22/02/11**

<b>Policy Title:</b> Supported bus network budget – proposal to reduce budget by £100,000			
<b>Policy Owner:</b> John Anderson			<b>Date:</b> 24 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
<b>Type of Assessment</b>	Type 1 ✓	Type	Type
<b>Is this a policy or an action?</b> Action			
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This disability equalities impact assessment, together with the multi-strand equalities impact assessment related to this proposal, will continue over the next six months, if the proposal is approved, to guide the development of bus service prioritisation criteria and detailed implementation proposals to minimise negative impacts.</li> <li>• This record sheet covers the engagement work to date and findings that are emerging at a whole population level.</li> <li>• Disabled people are under-represented in bus patronage figures; superficially, any reduction of service would have a disproportionately low impact on disabled people at current levels of bus usage.</li> <li>• However, there is an unsatisfied travel demand amongst disabled people locally because, DAD reports, there are barriers to bus use; these barriers are cultural, attitudinal and operational as well as infrastructural.</li> <li>• If these barriers can be tackled and reduced, patronage from disabled people would increase; the loss of services would therefore be an opportunity cost to disabled people.</li> <li>• This may not be disproportional to the population as a whole on a numerical basis, but if the lack of access to alternative modes of</li> </ul>			

transport (walking, cycling and driving) relative to the rest of the population is taken into account, then the loss of services could be considered disproportional.

- Cumulative effects of people's circumstances and of other policy decisions need to be considered, for example.
  - In-year changes to the concessionary fare scheme will have relatively greater impact on disabled people with a concessionary pass who are in employment but cannot use their pass to get to work.
  - The withdrawal of funding to Ring-a-Ride affects a travel option that was available for older and disabled people.
  - Changes to Adult Social Care eligibility criteria may affect the disposable income of some disabled people and restrict the affordability of available travel options.
  - Disabled people living in rural locations without access to travel alternatives will be more disadvantaged than other people by loss of their bus service.
- The view that, across the whole population, there is no disproportionately negative effect on disabled people from this proposal must be tempered by further survey work around the development of options for implementing the proposal to engage with individual disabled bus users and non-users, so as to design options to minimise potential negative impacts.
- Disabled people are less affected at the whole population level because they are using public transport less than other people, and the wider issue of accessibility for disabled people needs to be addressed.

## **Background**

### ***Staged Impact Assessment:***

This assessment is the first stage of a three stage approach to assessing the impact on disabled people of the proposal to reduce the council's budget for supported bus services by £100,000. If it is approved, criteria for prioritising needs will be drawn up, and these will then shape detailed implementation proposals. At this stage potential impacts can be assessed only at the whole population level, but impacts on disabled people will also arise from the way the overall proposal is implemented and which bus services are affected. The staged approach is therefore necessary. The three stages are:

1. Assessment of the overall savings proposal, based on information obtained from a range of general engagement events staged from October to December 2010, and from surveys; this initial assessment stage will inform the Council's decision on the overall proposal when it considers the Medium Term Financial Plan in March.
2. Impact assessment of criteria to be used to shape the development of detailed proposals; this will include involvement of disabled people and a survey of users of supported services, and will be carried out in February and March 2011; criteria will be recommended to Cabinet in April; impact assessment will inform the development of criteria to minimise negative impacts and will be reported to Cabinet to inform its decision.
3. The development of detailed proposals using the criteria established in stage 2 must be informed by assessment that considers the impact of options at the level of individual service users. This stage is scheduled for May and June, with proposals to be considered by Cabinet in July 2011, and will include further involvement of disabled people and engagement with stakeholders and service users.

### ***Evidence to date:***

This stage 1 assessment is based on information from the following sources:

- General Talking Together events on 8<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> November
- Older People's Talking Together event on 15<sup>th</sup> November
- Disabled People's Talking Together event on 16<sup>th</sup> November
- Children and Young People's Talking Together event on 15<sup>th</sup> January
- Responses received from the two consultation phases on the MTFP proposals in November 2010 and January 2011 (the January consultation is ongoing as this assessment is being drafted, and it will be modified if necessary to reflect any further comments received)
- Meeting with Parish Councils representatives on 18<sup>th</sup> November
- Findings of survey of bus use by residents of Sadberge carried out by Sadberge Parish Council
- Demographic profiles of bus patronage from Council survey conducted in October 2008 and annual Arriva customer satisfaction surveys in December 2009 and December 2010

### ***Links to 2010/11 in-year budget reduction proposals:***

The cumulative impact of the current proposal combined with in-year savings measures must be considered. These measures are:

- Concessionary fares – contraction of local arrangements to statutory levels of provision, resulting in loss of free travel for qualifying people (60 years of age rising to 65 over next 10 years) before 9.30am and after 11.00pm – implemented from 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010.
- Withdrawal of taxi vouchers – from 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

- Withdrawal of funding for Ring-a-Ride – from end of 2010.
- Reduction of grant funding to DAD for the Shopmobility service – implemented from autumn 2010 grant payment, which was reduced pro-rata.

Direct engagement with disabled people was carried out in the impact assessment of these proposals, and in particular the Ring a Ride proposal. This engagement included questionnaire surveys of service users and discussion with DAD. Engagement with DAD has continued in the development of Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3).

Cumulative effects could also arise in combination with proposals affecting Adult Social Care if these resulted in reduced disposable income for some disabled people.

***Links to other current savings proposals:***

The combined effect of this proposal and the in-year transport related proposals referenced above with other current savings proposals need to be considered in relation to disabled people., in particular:

- Adult Social care proposals to reduce the level of income disregard in assessing eligibility and reduction in the allocation for personalised budgets could reduce disposable income; combined with reduced bus services and affordable/accessible travel options this could have a limiting effect on disabled people.
- Arts Centre, Civic Theatre and Libraries Review: the potential loss of or reduction in arts and cultural services combined with reduced travel options could impact disproportionately on disabled people, for whom travel to facilities across the region (e.g. Newcastle or Leeds) might not be feasible.

***Transport and disabled people – an overview:***

The Arriva satisfaction survey for 2009 indicates that:

- 30% of passengers are aged 60 or over, and 27% are retired; in the population as a whole 19.5% are of retirement age (2009 mid year estimates)
- 63% of passengers are female, compared to 51.4% in the whole population
- 15-17% claimed a physical or mental impairment; the 2009 mid year estimates indicate 20.4% of the whole population with a long-term limiting condition (the different terminologies are not directly comparable but overlap sufficiently to be a helpful guide); other survey sources have consistently shown between 20% and 25% of the whole population claiming a disability or long-term limiting illness.

The Council's November 2008 survey of Supported Bus Service users found a similar level, 30%, of patronage from older people (concessionary fare pass users) but found that only 7% of passengers considered themselves to have a physical or mental impairment that affected their travel choices.

These data indicate that on both commercial bus services and supported services, patronage shows disproportionately high numbers of older people and females, but relatively low numbers of disabled people. This suggests that a reduction in supported services is likely to have a disproportionate negative impact on older people and women. The multi strand self assessment carried out at the beginning of the MTFP process also highlighted potential impacts on children and young people, in terms of access to education and leisure, and disproportionate impacts on people living in the rural areas. These impacts need to be explored in detail with service users as criteria and detailed proposals are developed in stages 2 and 3 of the process.

However this assessment is focused on disabled people. There is a correlation between older people and disabled people, and this should be considered in further detailed work, but the above statistical indications of under representation of disabled people in bus patronage suggest that any reduction of services would have a disproportionately low impact on disabled people. This is superficially correct at the whole population level but a simplistic conclusion. The multi-strand self assessment highlights potential negative impact on disabled people and people with a long-term

limiting illness, despite under-representation in bus patronage, for the following reasons.

- Disabled people appear to be under-represented in bus patronage figures because there are barriers to use of buses, as reported by DAD, noted in the DEIA on Ring-a-Ride and taken up in discussions around LTP3. These barriers are primarily linked to attitudes, driver training and detailed bus operational matters rather than physical infrastructure.
- The key issue reported by DAD is lack of access to transport that offers freedom of movement comparable to that available to the population as a whole. The potential cessation of the Ring-a-Ride service, with only 30 to 40 regular users, was regarded as relatively marginal compared to this wider issue.
- The same argument could be applied to the loss of some supported services. However, if the barriers referred to above were to be tackled so that access was unhindered, we could expect a significant increase in bus use by disabled people, for whom alternative forms of transport are more restricted than for the population as a whole, and the loss of supported services would be an opportunity cost for the future.
- Notwithstanding this speculation about the future, there will be disabled people who currently use supported bus services. At the meeting with Parish Council representatives in November, for example, wheelchair users who are also bus users living in Hurworth Place and Neasham were mentioned. Further work in stages 2 and 3 of the assessment should identify all disabled users who may be affected by the different options for implementing the proposal. As stated above, disabled people are likely to have fewer transport alternatives available to them, and in this regard they could experience disproportionate impact from the loss of a service.

The question of proportionality is central to impact assessment. Is the impact of a policy change or action on people with 'protected characteristics' disproportionate to that on the population as a whole. At the level of the whole population, this proposal would appear potentially to have a disproportionate impact on older people and women, but not on disabled people.

But the question of access to alternative forms of transport approaches proportionality from another perspective. The loss of service to a disabled passenger with no alternative will be disproportionate to the loss of service for the non-disabled passenger who can walk, cycle, use a bus service that they have to walk to, or drive. These are matters

Another disproportionality argument might be that disabled people have fewer alternatives available to them compared to other passengers. However, the 2008 survey of a sample of all supported bus users asked people what they would do if service destinations or timings changed. A total of 71 different responses were offered, of which only 8 (11.3%) indicated a viable alternative bus route or a travel solution such as walking or cycling. In reality, with information, advice and support, this would likely be higher, particularly in the urban area, but this does not suggest that alternative travel options are more readily available to the population of bus users as a whole than to disabled people.

***Detailed engagement findings related to disabled people:***

The following is a summary of the views submitted on this proposal in terms of its impact on disabled people through the various consultative and engagement processes staged since November 2011. Views have been expressed across a wide range of population/interest groups and will be picked up in the multi-strand equalities impact assessment; the following points have been made in relation to disabled people's concerns.

- Cumulative effects: disabled people with concessionary passes cannot use them to get to work because of the in-year changes to the concessionary scheme, and are also restricted in accessing college, day services and medical appointments before 9.30am; this may be compounded by the effects of changes to eligibility criteria for Adult Social Care on people's disposable income, combined with the proposed reduction in services, removal of Ring-a-Ride and loss of taxi vouchers. The change to the concessionary scheme is also reported to have resulted in overcrowding on buses at 9.30am, and this could affect disabled people disproportionately, for example in there not being space for wheelchairs.

- Isolation: depending on which services are reduced, some disabled people could be cut off or isolated, particularly those living in rural areas. The withdrawal of taxi vouchers has increased the isolation of people who cannot use buses or afford commercial taxi fares.
- West Park Hospital: loss of services to the hospital, particularly on Sundays and evenings, would affect people attending the hospital by restricting visitors.
- Health and well-being: linked to above, there are a number of potential impacts. Services to hospitals and health facilities generally should be a priority for retention. Linked to issues of isolation above, people may be reluctant to access health services if it becomes more difficult or costly. Loneliness can be an issue if people can't get out, and being able to get on a bus and go somewhere is great for people's self confidence.
- The survey carried out in Sadberge found bus users are predominantly older people and that trips to the doctor's, hospital and shops dominated bus use; for the majority of users there is no alternative form of transport.
- Travel to college and to employment is important for younger users.
- Several respondents suggested that reduced frequencies (morning, midday, after work) would be acceptable if that meant the service would be retained. Reduced frequency would also be acceptable if services could then extend into the evening.
- Alternative transport: can the number of accessible taxis be increased to both improve transport provision for disabled people and compensate for loss of bus services.
- 'Mobility' services (comments assumed to relate to Ring-a-Ride and Shopmobility): for some people scheduled bus services are not an option, and loss of mobility services is a big issue.
- Evening services: for some people these are as important as daytime services – for going to work, access to the Gateway Club; could daytime frequencies be reduced to retain some evening service.

### **What are the positive or negative effects that the action will have on disabled people?**

#### **Positive Impacts**

There are no positive impacts for disabled people from this proposal.

#### **Negative Impacts**

There would be no disproportionately negative impacts on disabled people as a result of the overall proposal to reduce the budget for supported bus services by £100,000. There will undoubtedly be impacts on disabled people, but no more than for the whole population affected by reductions in services. There will be disproportionately negative impacts on older people, women and, possibly, children and younger people, simply because they have higher representation, proportionate to the whole population, amongst bus users. The impact on older people in particular will be compounded by the cumulative effects of the proposal combined with the changes to the concessionary fare scheme implemented in 2010.

Disproportionate impacts on disabled people could arise in the translation of the overall savings proposal into detailed revisions to services. For example, loss of service to West Park Hospital could affect people with mental health conditions because family and friends are less able to visit. Disabled people with impaired mobility living in rural locations may be affected by loss of a bus service more than other people living in the same location, who may be able to access alternative forms of transport, or disabled people in the urban area for whom alternative bus routes may be available.

The potential negative impacts of detailed proposals could be compounded by the cumulative effects of the termination of the Ring-a-Ride service, the withdrawal of taxi vouchers and the

changes to the concessionary fare scheme. It must be remembered that disabled people of working age, who may have very limited income, can be eligible for concessionary passes. They may already have been impacted in their ability to access work affordably through the changes to the concessionary scheme, and the cessation of their bus service would be a double hit on them.

#### **What evidence supports this?**

The evidence and arguments for the conclusion that there will be no disproportionate impact on disabled people from the overall proposal are set out in the section above, headed 'Transport and disabled people – an overview'.

Further survey work is needed in stages 2 and 3 to identify individual disabled service users and the ways in which they may potentially be affected by different options for implementing the overall saving.

As well as further survey and engagement work to be commissioned by officers, the excellent detailed survey carried out by a representative of Sadberge Parish Council of bus users in the village could be encouraged in other locations to inform the development of detailed proposals to minimise negative impacts.

#### **Who was involved?**

The 'Evidence to date' section on page 1 summarises the people and forums that have been involved in general engagement on the MTFP, and in specific exercises around this proposal, that have generated information used to prepare this assessment. Previous surveys and discussions with Ring-a-Ride users, DAD, and with users of both commercial and supported bus services have also been consulted in preparing this assessment.

The following staff have been involved:

John Anderson – Assistant Director, Regeneration, Planning & Transport: assessment 'owner'

Simon Houldsworth – Transport Policy Manager

Sue Dobson – Principal Transport Officer

Gill Hutchinson – Transport Officer

Peter Roberts – Policy Advisor: assessment author

#### **What action will you take as a result of the impact assessment?**

This draft assessment will be shared with the DAD Impact Assessment Steering Group at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011.

The Steering Group will be invited to contribute to the formulation of the criteria to be applied in drawing up detailed proposals to implement the budget reduction, if this is agreed

A further survey of supported bus service users will be commissioned to inform the development of detailed proposals. Through this, and through further consultation with DAD and parish representatives, we will seek to identify individual disabled people who could be affected by detailed proposals and seek to both minimise the impact of proposals on them and to identify mitigating measures where proposals would have a negative impact on disabled people.

This assessment reinforces one of the key findings of both the Ring-a-Ride assessment and LTP3 discussions with DAD, namely that the cessation of services is less likely to impact on disabled people if they are unable to access the services in the first place. The priority for disabled people is to work towards creating a level playing field in terms of public transport provision that enables access to jobs and facilities on the same basis for everyone. This is a key outcome for LTP3.

#### **How and when will this action be monitored?**

The further work on developing detailed implementation proposals will be in accordance with the

timetable included in the proposal approved by Cabinet for consultation on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011, and attached to this assessment for information. The wider development of accessible transport provision for all must be progressed through LTP3 and the annual transport programmes.