

**DARLINGTON TRANSPORT FORUM**

22nd October, 2007

**PRESENT** – Councillor D. A Lyonette (in the Chair); Councillors Copeland, Coultas, Dunstone, Long, Robson and Ruck.

**APOLOGIES** – Mr D Whitfield.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors B. Jones and D. Jones.

**Officers in Attendance** – Richard Alty, Assistant Director - Development and Regeneration; Greg McDougall, Transport Officer (Project Co-ordinator); Owen Wilson, Policy Officer – Transport Policy; John Johnson, Project Manager, Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor.

**Representing Outside Organisations**

**Alzheimer’s Disease Society**

J. P. Rodwell

**Arriva North East**

T. Batty and L. Esnouf

**Darlington Association on Disability**

G. Pybus

**Darlington Motorcycle Action Group**

S. Hill

**Durham Constabulary**

M. Straugheir

**Durham Tees Valley Airport**

G. Smith

**GOLD**

L. Holmes and C. Ord

**Heighington Parish Council**

M.J. French

**National Council for Women**

P. Dore

**Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit**

J. Gregory

**Tees Valley Regeneration**

N. Astell

**Trade Union Council (TUC)**

J.Clark and C. Moore

**Independent Members**

K. Frid, G. C. Davis, R Grassick

**14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**15. MINUTES** – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Forum held on 16th July, 2007.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

**16. MATTERS ARISING** – Pursuant to Minute 12/July/07, it was suggested that greater detail be included in the Minutes in relation to issues raised by Forum Members, including the written replies tabled at the meeting to questions raised. The Chair put to the meeting that Darlington Cycling Campaign be added to the membership of Darlington Transport Forum and invited to all future meetings. Members supported the suggestion.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the Minutes reflect the issues raised by Members in more detail, that tabled replies to questions be circulated with the minutes, and that Darlington Cycling Campaign be added to the membership of Darlington Transport Forum and invited to all future meetings.

**17. UPDATE DARLINGTON EASTERN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR** – John Johnson, Project Manager, updated the Forum on the progress of the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor. It was reported that the project was in week 39 of the 69-week programme of works and it was still on schedule for completion for Summer 2008. Work was near completion on the A66; work continues on the drainage and Red Hall Nature Reserve; the McMullen Road junction would be the last area of work to be completed and work would commence January/February 2008; and that the bridge would be delivered in sections and put together on site and lifted in place, which would mean that the A66 would only need to be closed on one occasion.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the position be noted.

**18. A NEW BUS NETWORK FOR DARLINGTON** – Liz Esnouf, Arriva North East addressed the meeting advising of the new bus network for Darlington.

Ms Esnouf explained the acquisition of Stagecoach by Arriva, and that the use of buses in Darlington was integral to the town and its economy. Following the results of a transport survey carried out last year it was reported that the main purpose of people visiting Darlington town centre on a bus was to shop; bus users more frequently visited Darlington town centre than car users in an average week; most bus passengers purchased something when visiting Darlington; bus users did undertake food retail shopping and that overall less time was spent travelling to Darlington on a bus than by car on an average journey.

It was explained that Darlington's economy was dependant on bus use and that Arriva would be enhancing the advertisement of their services available. Arriva's proposals included strengthening the economy; improving the stability of service to only make one change per year and only 2 cross boundary changes per year; undertake a consultation exercise to engage and seek views of the general public; making information more widely available; encouraging customer comments and overall making a commitment to Darlington to make public transport succeed for its residents.

Discussion ensued on real time information on bus stops and the financial responsibilities of the other Tees Valley Local Authorities; upgrading of buses to be Disability Act compliant and modernising of buses and in relation to satellite navigation systems and GPS; introduction of a Customer Care helpline; Memorandum of Understanding between Darlington Borough Council and Arriva; the success of the demonstration buses; the integration of bus stops within the town in relation to the shops and the design of a new bus network as a result of the consultation exercise; relocation of the bus garage/station to Faverdale; the suggestion of a shuttle bus to bring people into the centre of town; the value of bus lanes and whether buses actually benefit from them; movement of buses around the town with reference to safe speeds, is 20mph a sensible option; parking on bus lanes and buses not stopping at proper bus stops, which causes guide dogs to get confused about where they are when they disembark and training of bus drivers to include diversity awareness training.

The Chair thanked Liz Esnouf and her colleague Tony Batty Arriva North East for their attendance at the meeting.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the presentation be noted.

**19. TRAVEL PATTERNS IN DARLINGTON** – Owen Wilson, Policy Officer – Transport Policy introduced a PowerPoint presentation advising of travel and traffic monitoring within Darlington. The presentation included information in relation to the number of trips; school travel plans; bike it schools; automatic cycle counters; pedestrian counters, traffic counters and local motion.

It was acknowledged that more work was required on traffic counters and the Department of Transport would be considering the data gathered. Concerns were expressed about the use of percentages in presentations and asked for actual numbers in future. It was reported that 69% of people surveyed recognised the brand of Local Motion and Forum Members welcomed this and saw it as a success that should be celebrated.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the report and presentation be noted.

**20. LOCAL MOTION – INDIVIDUALISED TRAVEL MARKETING** – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting a summary of the individualised travel-marketing programme carried out in Darlington between 2005 and 2007 as part of the Local Motion project, and sought views from Forum Members about the programme and possible options for continuation.

Greg McDougall, Transport Officer (Project Co-ordinator) introduced the report advising that individualised travel marketing could reduce car driver trips by 7-15% and it had a proven record of success. During the three years of the project, all households in Darlington were sent a letter informing them that a travel advisor would visit them, households, which took part in conversations with advisors and requested a travel resource were considered to be ‘participating households’ and households which were uninterested or did not request a resource were considered to be ‘not participating’. Customer satisfaction was extremely high for years one and two and year three had only just been completed and as such a survey had not been carried out.

The next stage was to evaluate the success of the individualised travel marketing programme and decide how to carry on the results of the last three years. Options included: direct mail to new households, issuing new home packs through estate agents for homebuyers and continuation of some form of door to door contact.

Members of the Forum were keen that the travel advisors visiting households had a thorough knowledge of Darlington, perception training and were persuasive to change peoples opinions about Darlington and the public transport available in the town. Particular reference was made to the costs per household and the potential savings to be made. It was suggested that in a future report that comparisons should be drawn to Worchester and Peterborough the other two towns in the project, to monitor their success with the project.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the report be noted.

**21. ISSUES RAISED BY FORUM MEMBERS** – Submitted – A number of issues raised by members of the Forum were circulated at the meeting, together with related responses. The issues raised by members included: -

- Park and ride – a review of the current position;
- Findings of the bus stop review being conducted by the Council;
- Obstruction of bus stops and actions to be taken;
- Noise nuisance from loud exhaust and boy racers;
- A safer Belisha crossing for pedestrians on existing crossing under Parkgate railway bridge;
- Harrogate Hill Primary School travel plans;
- Obstructions at bus stops on North Road;
- Lighting on bus stops;
- Pedestrian crossing on Crown Street
- Pavement area around East Street bus stops

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the responses given to the issues raised be noted, and that a copy of the responses be circulated with the minutes.

**22. QUESTIONS** – A number of questions were raised by Forum Members including the location of dropped kerbs in relation to bus stops and the need for a code of practice to be produced by the Council in consultation with Darlington Association on Disability; the likelihood of GOLD Transport Group disbanding and whether questions form GOLD Members could be put to the Forum; traffic congestion on Tubwell Row and the left turn into Skinnergate from the car park why a temporarily bollard couldn’t be installed to prevent people from turning right.