



UK Bus Summit Update

Committee Operations

Date of meeting 4 May 2018

Date of report 12 April 2018

Report by Senior Director

1. Object of report

To update the Committee on the UK Bus Summit which took place in London on 8 February 2018 and was attended by the Chair of SPT and the Bus Development Manager¹.

2. Background

2.1 The annual UK Bus Summit brings together representatives from bus operators, manufacturers, suppliers, academics, consultants, public transport authorities, local and national government to discuss key issues facing the bus industry and market. This year's Summit was chaired by Professor David Begg, with over 200 delegates in attendance.

2.2 The overall theme of this year's event was the role of bus in supporting delivery of Low Emission Zones across the UK, with a series of presentations and panel 'question and answer' sessions based on the following main issues:

- The role of the bus in reducing emissions;
- The road map to zero emissions buses;
- Why buses are central to city economies; and
- Impact of disruptive technology on the bus sector.

3. Update

The conference presentations and panel sessions produced some thought-provoking debate and contributions from the audience. Some key themes which emerged throughout the day included:

- The combined challenge of addressing bus patronage decline, combatting congestion and dealing with poor air quality in UK towns & cities. Similarly, the negative impacts of bus service cuts and fare increases on accessibility, affordability,

¹ Attendance approved by the Strategy and Programmes Committee, 2 February 2018. Report: http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/sp020218_agenda13.pdf

equality, the economy and the environment were also discussed. There was expressed a growing recognition that buses are part of the solution to congestion, and not 'the problem';

- The benefits of new Euro 6 Diesel buses in terms of reduced NOx and improved air quality, compared to previous Euro derivatives. Similarly, the benefit of retrofitting older diesel buses (to Euro 6 equivalence) was highlighted as being key to address the air quality challenge in the next few years;
- It was also highlighted that Euro 6 diesel buses require suitable bus running speeds for them to operate efficiently, an increasing challenge due to growing congestion. The consensus appeared to be that congestion should be addressed through improved bus priority measures, private car restraint, effective parking policies and improved levels of governments support for 'low emission' bus services;
- The increasing deployment of zero & ultra-low emission buses in the UK (i.e. battery electric, hydrogen fuel cell & biogas) was highlighted. The general consensus view was that battery electric propelled buses are most likely to offer a longer term solution, though high capital costs (for both vehicles and charging equipment) and limited battery range remain current challenges to further deployment;
- In respect of the role of buses in supporting city economies, presentations were given by representatives from Wolverhampton, Leeds and Glasgow City Councils. Common themes from these included the key role of bus in the economy of their cities, partnership working with operators (to improve the accessibility, affordability and attractiveness of bus services) and the need for strong political leadership to tackle congestion, reallocate road space, improve passenger facilities, deliver bus priority measures and progressive parking policies, in order to let bus services and economies thrive and grow;
- Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council (GCC) gave an interesting and well-received presentation on work to establish the 'Connectivity Commission' tasked with addressing congestion within the city and improving bus services. Cllr Aitken also highlighted GCC's plans to seek new partnership arrangements with local bus operators, and spoke of their plans to deliver Scotland's first Low Emission Zone (to include all modes including buses, and private cars in due course). She also highlighted recent improvements to bus operations and passenger facilities in Union Street (delivered in partnership with SPT as part of the Fastlink project) as being an example of good practice, and showed what could be done to reduce congestion and prioritise buses; and
- The final session of the Summit considered the impact of disruptive technology on the bus sector, particularly the development of autonomous, shared, electric and interconnected vehicles, which were viewed as likely to impact on demand for traditional bus services – particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. The potential benefits of developments including Mobility as a Service, Smart Ticketing and Open Data, were highlighted in terms of promoting bus service use and in tailoring of service design and delivery to better meet passenger needs.

4. Conclusions

The Summit proved to be a useful opportunity to hear views on current issues, opportunities and best practice in bus across the UK. It also provided a good opportunity for networking and contacts were made with colleagues in the public and private sectors which may prove to be fruitful in future in assisting SPT achieve its goals.

5. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>In line with the RTS.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None.</i>

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