

DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Bus Vannin Accessibility Steering Group Meeting Tuesday 2nd August 2022 at 2pm The Boardroom, Sea Terminal Building

Present:

Mrs K Sharpe, MLC (Chair), (KS)

██████████ (KW)

██████████ (DC)

██████████ (SU)

In attendance:

██████████ Deputy CEO, Department of Infrastructure (EC)

██████████ Head of Operations, Bus Vannin

██████████ Project Officer (SC) (Notetaker)

1.	Introductions KS welcomed the new Steering Group Members to the meeting, and all attendees introduced themselves.	
2.	Conflicts of Interest It was noted that there were no conflicts of interest.	
3.	Minutes of the Last Meeting Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.	
4.	Matters Arising (i) <u>Standardised Language and Future appointment of Equality Advisor and Equality Champion</u> SC reported that Mrs Poole Wilson had confirmed that she had raised a number of issues with the Cabinet Office, including the need for a standardised language approach. She also advised that whilst there were no indications regarding the future appointment of an Equality Advisor and an Equality Champion that the Cabinet Office was working to produce updated documentation for Equality Impact Screening and Impact Assessment, together with updated guidance documents. (ii) <u>Bus Vannin & Highways Division joint working</u> DC enquired whether a workshop between the Design Team and Bus Vannin had taken place. SC advised, and IB confirmed, that whilst no formal workshop had taken place, there was greater collaboration between the two divisions.	

	<p><u>Road Closures & Impact on Bus Vannin Services</u></p> <p>Discussion took place regarding road closures, and the impact on bus services. It was noted that IB could request that he be included in the road closures notification emails.</p> <p>It was suggested that there may be merit in inviting someone from Highways tasked with addressing bus stop issues, to attend a meeting of the BVASG to discuss bus stop designs and locations, and agreed that this be organised.</p> <p><u>Central Bus Station</u></p> <p>Discussion took place regarding the need for a bus station, and it was noted that despite a lack of progress, a new facility was still being progressed on the site of the former bus station.</p>	<p>SC</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>(i)</p>	<p>Steering Group Report & Recommendations to the Minister</p> <p>The Committee considered the options identified in the report, as follows:</p> <p><u>Option 1</u></p> <p>It was noted that clarification was needed regarding the conditions necessary for the safe carriage of mobility scooters.</p> <p>SU reported that his chair was far heavier than mobility scooters, and that in wet weather, was not restrained, as both the tyres and floor of the bus was wet. He enquired whether it would be possible for a surface with a greater grip to be installed in the wheelchair space.</p> <p>IB advised that he was not aware of any issues on Bus Vannin vehicles due to the floor coverings, but that he would make enquiries about whether that could be achieved, without the necessity to re-test the vehicle for licensing.</p> <p>It was noted that more people travelling with mobility aids increased the potential for other wheelchair/mobility scooter users to be stranded at bus stops as the available space was already occupied.</p> <p>EC advised that there is only anecdotal information about the current frequency of such occurrences, and it was agreed that a process to capture this information was required, which could be gathered by Tetra notification. IB advised that the introduction would need engagement with the Union.</p> <p>Discussion took place regarding bus operators in larger areas, providing a taxi to carry individuals who are unable to board a bus when the wheelchair space was already occupied. It was noted that due to a shortage of wheelchair accessible taxis on the Isle of Man, it was not possible to consider offering such a service.</p>	<p>IB</p> <p>IB</p>

	<p>Discussion took place regarding the Dial a Ride Service, and it was noted that whilst the service was available if booked on the day, pre-booking provided a better opportunity for times.</p> <p>It was agreed that the accessibility consultation results be considered at a future meeting of the Steering Group, to assist in identifying where people wish to travel.</p> <p>SU expressed concern that the trial would take place over a 12 month period, and would be restricted to Douglas users only. He therefore suggested a shorter time period.</p> <p>It was noted that there was no information regarding the number of potential users: the "hidden demand".</p> <p>Discussion took place regarding whether mobility scooters should be adopted on all routes – including the high speed routes. SU advised that the pull-down seat forms an effective barrier. IB confirmed that may be true, but that it was not officially signed off as such, and would therefore be an issue in any insurance claim.</p> <p>EC reported that the paper is missing the ideal solution: ie where we would wish to be, in an ideal world, in 5 years' time. The trial would only progress the issue part of the way – there was a need to include within the paper, the next steps.</p> <p>Discussion took place that where an improvement is made to a road eg installation of a dropped kerb, that it was important to include both sides of the road. It was suggested that this may occur where highway maintenance work was undertaken. [SC would raise this issue with Highways Division.]</p> <p>It was noted that additional cycle lanes have an impact on pavement width. EC reported that there is a hierarchy of users: pedestrians, cyclists, then vehicles. This would be referenced within the forthcoming Transport Strategy.</p> <p>It was noted that there was a need for specific disability training for Bus Vannin staff, and agreed that this should be a recommendation from the Group.</p> <p>IB confirmed that there was no differentiation within the guidance about types of wheelchair – just the standard "reference wheelchair."</p>	<p>SC</p> <p>SC</p> <p>SC</p> <p>SC/IB</p> <p>SC/IB</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>It was suggested that the next steps following a successful trial, would be to extend the service to additional routes. It was noted however that due to the bus network set-up, this may require an operational change to include "hopper buses".</p> <p>IB advised that this would not be impossible, but would require some "unpicking" and changes to the current operational model.</p>	

	<p>KW reported that there are many issues involved, and that the No 21 route provided a good starting point. It was noted that the next step would involve a milestone plan, and that as matters progressed, usage would increase.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Group would provide their suggestions as to what the ideal situation would look like, and DC suggested that this was that everyone would be able to travel to any destination on the bus route, within timetable restrictions.</p> <p>Discussion took place regarding wheelchair accessible taxis, and the introduction of regulations regarding accessibility. It was suggested that an enquiry to DEFA, as the Department with the responsibility for progressing the introduction of the Regulations, could be an outcome of the trial.</p> <p>It was agreed that Option 3, to undertake the trial on the No 21 route when all stops have been made accessible, be rejected as a recommendation.</p> <p>It was agreed that Option 4, to reject the carriage of mobility scooters on Bus Vannin Services, be rejected as a recommendation.</p> <p>Option 5, to explore the introduction of a "Dial-a-Ride" demand responsive transport for mobility scooter users was discussed. It was suggested that no segregation for people with a disability, could be adopted by the Group as a key "touchstone" principle.</p> <p>EC reported that demand responsive transport is an issue that is due to be reviewed, and that accessibility should form part of that review. It was noted that this option would not provide a "quick fix", as it would require the purchase of additional vehicles, which would likely take approximately 18 months.</p> <p>Option 6 was rejected as a recommendation. It was noted that there already exist a number of companies that lease out mobility scooters.</p> <p>It was agreed that Option 2, a trial on the No 21 route, be the option recommended to the Minister. It was agreed that the trial be extended after 6 months to the other loop routes, No 22 and No 25, to upper Douglas, Willaston and Onchan. Extension of the service beyond these routes would require re-visiting the issue of speed and the restraint, or reconfiguration of the bus network.</p> <p>IB reported that it would be important to engage with the Unions regarding the trial, and that driver training would be a significant issue.</p> <p>Discussion also took place regarding the scooter and rider approval and training process, and the importance of ensuring that only approved riders on their approved scooters be able to access bus</p>	<p>SC</p> <p>SC</p>
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	<p>services. It was suggested that a small sticker could be attached to the scooter.</p> <p>It was noted that there would be a need to identify a clear methodology to collect data regarding the review.</p> <p>It was noted that there was a two week window to complete and finalise the report, if it was to be considered at the October sitting of Tynwald.</p>	<p>SC</p> <p>SC</p>
7.	<p>Redi-Weld</p> <p>The Steering Group considered the suggestion from [REDACTED] regarding Redi-weld bus pads. It was noted that this product could provide an off-the-shelf temporary solution for bus stops.</p> <p>SC confirmed that [REDACTED] the Design Engineer within Highways Services, had given a commitment to look into this.</p>	<p>SC/BA</p>
8.	<p>Free School Bus Passes and 1 mile policy</p> <p>The Steering Group considered the briefing note regarding the free bus passes. It was agreed that clarity was required regarding the process of obtaining a bus pass; whether there were any exemptions and any appeals processes.</p>	<p>SC</p>
9.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>It was agreed that a further meeting would be scheduled for September.</p>	
10.	<p>The meeting closed at 4.10 pm</p>	

