

SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES

Overview



Executive Summary

This report sets out an overview of the Council's activities around subsidised bus services, providing information on which services are supported, why they are supported, contract management, usage data and a review of the existing services. The Council supports a range of bus services across the City either in their entirety or partially supporting specific additions to existing commercial services. The Public Transport Team fulfil this function utilising an annual budget of £382k securing services through a combination of full OJEU tender processes and competitive quotes based on the nature of the service procured.

Legal Background

The Council can provide subsidy for the operation of local passenger transport under the legislation set out in the 1985 Transport Act. The two statutory duties detailed in section 63 of the Act for Local Authorities are:

- To secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council considers appropriate to meet any public transport requirements which would not otherwise be met.
- In exercising functions relating to public passenger transport services, to have regard to the needs of elderly or disabled persons

Subsidising a bus service

There are a range of different circumstances whereby a bus service is subsidised. The three main areas are:

- At the end of the existing contract period or following a regular review.
- Intervention following changes to either subsidised or commercial routes.
- Utilising section 106 funds as they become available

Bus services subsidised as part of Section 106 agreements are outside the scope of this report although wherever possible they are incorporated within the general framework for delivery to maximise value for money.

Regular review

- Patronage data is reviewed on a quarterly basis to track the effectiveness of each individual service and the cost per passenger.
- All services are reviewed regularly through the deployment of on board staff that collect data on the actual journeys passengers are making; this is necessary as the monthly patronage data received from Bus Operators only gives overall trip data not specific journey data. These reviews enable the team to prioritise the sections of existing routes where the majority of trips are made, where there are no alternative services and offer the best service to communities.

Based on the data provided in Appendix B Plymouth residents make an average of 8397 weekly journeys, at an average subsidy of £0.88 per journey.

Bus Service Operators Grant

It should also be noted that the Department for Transport (DfT) has decided to allocate the fuel duty rebate, Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), directly to Local Authorities in respect to all subsidised services from 2013/14. A consultation paper is currently available from the DfT on the possible further expansion of this.

Community Transport

Community Transport which is largely provided by the Charity Access Plymouth plays a key role in the provision of transport to Plymouth residents. The Ring and Ride and Community Car services offer door to door transport for elderly and/or disabled residents who are unable to use conventional public transport either because of availability or due to difficulties accessing it. A current trial is underway for residents in the north of the City through the provision of a Dial A Ride service which allows pre book-able journeys at staggered costs to any destination including the Hospital, supermarkets, or even bus stops to allow passengers to interchange with bus services taking them into the City Centre or elsewhere. The services

The combined trips in 2011/12 on all Community Transport services was 12,728.

Review of existing subsidised services

Appendix B provides a list of the existing services the Council provide subsidy towards including overall cost and the cost per passenger.

Appendix A: Criteria for providing Subsidised Bus Services

The Council works to provide the most effective balance between offering services which positively impact upon residents lives and having as great a coverage as possible. The limited size of the budget and the unprecedented amount of changes in local bus services over the last three years has required a flexible and dynamic approach to ensure as comprehensive a service as possible. The following factors are taken into account when subsidising a bus service.

- Available budget.
- Cost per passenger journey based on total passengers (from surveys and ETM data for existing services). The Council's maximum guide cost is £1.65 per passenger. This is reviewed annually subject to industry costs and inflation.
- Total passengers per journey.
- Total unique passengers per journey (those who would not have access to an alternative service within 400 metres at least an hourly frequency)
- Knowledge and detailed understanding of both historical and current context of services.
- Feedback from residents, stakeholders and Members.
- Topography.
- Car ownership levels.
- Accessibility links to the following:
 1. Main and local shopping centres / health facilities
 2. Key hubs to secure connections elsewhere
 3. Employment
 4. Education
 5. Leisure/tourism facilities

Detailed tender specifications are given to Bus Operators to quote against but the Public Transport Team is always clear that innovative proposals are welcome.

Appendix B: Current bus services supported by Plymouth City Council

Service	Route Details	Operator	Days Subsidised	Full/Part Subsidy	Average Weekly Trips	Contract expiry date
7D	City Centre - Plymstock - Hooe	Target Travel	Monday to Friday	Full	636	23 May 2015
13	City Centre - Weston Mill & Saltash Passage	Plymouth Citybus	Monday to Friday	Full	1,105	23 May 2015
14	City Centre - Devonport - Keyham - Ham - Crownhill - Derriford	Target Travel	Monday to Friday	Full	1,414	23 May 2015
16B	City Centre - Kings Tamerton - Holly Park	Plymouth Citybus	Daily	Part (Evenings only)	757	31 May 2014
18	City Centre - Plymstock - Elburton	Target Travel	Monday to Friday	Full	455	23 May 2015
19	City Centre - Coxside - Cattedown - Merafield	Target Travel	Monday to Friday	Full	538	Rolling contract subject to full review
25	City Centre - Barbican - Hoe	Plymouth Citybus	Sundays & Bank Holidays - Summer Only	Part (Sundays & Bank Holidays Summer Only)	203	31 May 2014
27	City Centre - Mutley - Efford - Deer Park - Austin Farm	Plymouth Citybus	Sundays & Bank Holidays Only	Part (Sundays & Bank Holidays)	218	23 May 2015
28B	City Centre - Egguckland - Derriford Hospital	Plymouth Citybus	Sunday to Thursday	Part (Evenings only)	673	31 May 2014
31	City Centre - Ford - Beacon Park	Plymouth Citybus	Monday to Friday	Full	689	31 May 2014
39	City Centre - Compton - Morrisons - Hartley Vale	Target Travel	Monday to Friday	Full	539	23 May 2015

52	Plympton - Derriford Hospital	Target Travel	Monday to Friday	Full	786	23 May 2015
223	St Budeaux - Kings Tamerton Circular	St Budeaux Taxibus	Monday to Friday	Full	384	29 March 2013

