



National Pensioners Convention Transport Conference Thursday 20th September 2018.

The chairman welcomed delegates to the meeting and expressed the NPC's thanks to the Unison North West branch for facilitating the use of their conference room. He then welcomed the Lord Mayor of Manchester and invited her to address the conference.

The Mayor gave a special welcome to those delegates who were visiting Manchester for the first time. She gave a short presentation on the history of Manchester including that Manchester Victoria Station is the oldest Railway station in the world and was opened in 1844. She went on to say that that Victoria was the site of the Peterloo Massacre, The **Peterloo Massacre** occurred at St Peter's Field, Manchester, England, on 16 August 1819, when cavalry charged into a crowd of 60,000–80,000 who had gathered to demand the reform of parliamentary representation. She went on to say that there is a need for HS3 which will provide a link from East to west and is needed for the Northern Region.

The next Speaker to address the conference was Ann Frye International specialist on accessible transport.

What do we know about older people? We know that many do retain a high level of fitness, but many who are over 75 have some form of disability this can include some loss of balance, hearing loss and general loss of mobility that can stop them from traveling. The biggest disability is anxiety, the lack of signage and unable to hear announcements clearly and lack of staff available to ask for assistance, these all add to anxiety when traveling on public transport. As we grow older many will find it more difficult in getting around, and worry over falling, these are just some of the problems that many older people experience.

When it comes to Local public availability of bus services, there is a need for up to date information on the service to be able to plan your journey, and that the bus should be easily accessible. All buses should be access by 2020. There are still problems on some trains due to the older rolling stock not being up graded. There is a lack of enforcement by the government on these issues but we have come a long way over the last 15-20 years. There has been improvement with information on busses and trains with announcements of the next stop.

However there are many areas where things have changed for the worse. Reduction of staff on railways and booking office closures. Using machines and booking on line is a major problem for many people. Then there is the loss of much rural bus services, and Dial a Ride services. This can lead to some who live rural areas are often left stranded and this can lead to loneliness.

Ann reported on cities across the world that has adopted systems to ensure that the elderly and disabled are catered for when it comes to transport. For example on Rotterdam when planning for

new transport, the department for transport will consult with the Elderly and Disabled on what is required. The Department for Transport should here should consult with older people to find out what is needed for older people using public transport.

In closing she said, there are those who think many problems are with older people not being able to use technology, this will be resolved as the younger generation come through. This is not true, as time goes by technology will also change and so the problem will still exist. We must ensure that these issues are not ignored.

Graham Stringer MP Transport Select Committee Gave a report on Accessibility Developments in Manchester.

He said one of the most annoying statistics I hear on the transport select committee, is that there is 85% satisfaction among bus users. The problem is that there has been a massive reduction of bus services; this is not just in Rural Communities but also in large cities. The result of these cuts is that those who do not drive cut off and this can lead to loneliness in the older generation.

Both the Elected Mayors of both Manchester and Liverpool are trying to get control of bus services this can be done through franchising. However the bus companies will be opposing this as they fear a loss of profits.

The Bus services were de-regulated in the eighties and privatised. As an MP when asked what can be done about the lack of bus services, the answer nothing as no Politician has any control over bus services apart from bus subsidy for those that have bus services taken away, so the bus company has full control over bus routes.

He went on to point out the recent problems with the rail services in the North and in the SE resulting from the time table changes. This caused a lot of problems with some of the elderly as there were delays and often having to change platforms at short notice.

Fiona Walshe Deputy Director Deputy Director Passenger Experience, Department of Transport.

She informed the conference that she was not a Politician but a Civil Servant working for the Department of Transport.

She gave a Presentation on the introduction of smart ticketing and the benefits that these can provide. So what is smart ticketing? In 1986 the electronic strip was introduced onto the paper tickets. London then introduced the Oyster card, there is also an ITSO card, which is mostly used for season ticketing, these are more robust than the paper type so there is less need for replacements of damaged cards. You can book on line and have a Bar Code sent to your phone. On the London underground you can use your Debit or Credit card to travel.

From the end of 2018 the Secretary of State has announced that he wants smart ticketing across the network, and has asked train companies to update their systems. This is a work in progress and is designed to reduce queues at ticket offices. However we are aware that not everyone has a bank account, this can be for a variety of reasons. So there are no plans to withdraw the paper tickets from ticket offices or Machines

The Next Item on the agenda was a report from Terry Carter NPC Transport Committee Member on the NPC response to the Health of the Bus Market Inquiry.

Terry presented the conference with a draft report to the Department of transport on the health of the Bus Market. And asked members to submit any information that they feel will be helpful to the Transport committee before the NPC submit their report on the 24th September.

The House of Commons Transport Select Committee have launched an inquiry into the health of the Bus Market in England, giving examples that the number of passengers in London has increased by 52% over the last 25 years, whilst those in metropolitan areas have reduced by 40%.

These figures of course do not take into account the increasing population, and the DfT statistics show that between 2009/10 and 2016/17 the number of local passenger journeys in England overall fell by nearly 10%

Terry presented slides that showed the general trend of bus usage between the 1950s and 2017, in the 1950s total bus passenger usage was 17234, in 2017 this had dropped to 4931. Bus service have decreased severely over the past 3 years in both metropolitan and rural areas. Those who are affected most are those services that are supported by the Councils, and this is a major issue.

The Committee is particularly interested to receive evidence on:

- The effectiveness and ambition of the Department for Transport's policies on buses;
- Factors affecting bus use, including the reliability of the bus service, congestion and the ways bus companies are dealing with congestion, and the effectiveness of bus priority measures;
- The provision of services to isolated communities in rural and urban areas, and the reliance of particular communities and groups of people on bus services;
- The viability and long-term sustainability of bus services, including the effectiveness of funding, fare structures and public grants;
- Regulations affecting the provision of bus services and the adequacy of guidance to operators and local authorities.

The meeting Closed with the President Ron Douglas thanking all the speakers and the North West Unison Branch and all the delegates for their contribution to the Conference.

Rod Downing

Retired Members Secretary.

A full copy of the NPC submission document is available on request @ roddowning@btinternet.com.