

DRAFT

REVIEW OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

A CONSULTATION PAPER

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Please return Response Form by 24th February 2006



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

1. WHY ARE WE PUBLISHING THIS PAPER

In 2004 the Council established a Special Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel to conduct a wide ranging passenger transport review.

As a result of this review the Executive Member for Education has decided that a consultation exercise should be undertaken to include denominational transport and the provision of transport for all pupils [“Yellow bus” transport]. The Council also provides transport for pupils who live more than 3 miles from their nearest school (2 miles for under 8's) pupils with SEN and those whose routes to school are hazardous but the Council cannot charge for this transport and therefore these are not included in this consultation.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

In undertaking this review of transport the council has the following key principles: -

- To target current expenditure on Home to School Transport more equitably.
- To take account of all aspects of school choice and travel needs.
- To provide low cost transport to a much wider range of users than current policies allow.
- To increase bus services and ridership
- To reduce “school run” congestion.
- To have a school transport policy that provides free transport to those most in need.

3. DENOMINATIONAL TRANSPORT (To Church Schools)

Bath & North East Somerset Council reviewed and adopted a Home to School Transport Policy during 1997/98. This policy covers the circumstances in which pupils will qualify with assistance for transport between home and school. Part of the policy covers those pupils who qualify for assistance on denominational grounds. The current policy is as follows:-

“Bath & North East Somerset will provide transport to the nearest appropriate denominational school, as determined by the Authority in consultation with the local diocesan education authorities, provided that the statutory distance criteria are met and that proof of baptism in the relevant faith is given.”

3.1 CURRENT COSTS

We currently transport 473 pupils to school on denominational grounds. This costs a total of £300,000 per annum. Of the 473 pupils 279 travel on Public Transport and are issued with a bus pass, the remaining 194 travel on contracted vehicles.

3.2 HOW MUCH MIGHT THE CHARGE BE IN THE FUTURE?

If we were to look at recovering the complete cost this would equate to an average charge of £634 per pupil per year for denominational transport. This could increase further if, because of the cost, some parents choose not to use the transport.

Possible charges and income may be as follows:-

CONTRIBUTION PER ANNUM £	COST PER DAY £	ANNUAL INCOME £
95	0.50	45,000
190	1.00	90,000
285	1.50	135,000
380	2.00	180,000

Some pupils who receive transport on denominational grounds would also receive free transport on distance grounds if they attended their nearest appropriate school. The number of pupils who would currently qualify is 72. These pupils would not be charged reducing the annual income received.

NB. No charges are being considered for pupils in receipt of free school meals or those who receive free transport on distance grounds to their nearest school, hazardous route grounds or special educational needs reasons.

3.3 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CHARGING FOR DENOMINATIONAL TRANSPORT

3.3.1 IF WE RECOVER THE COMPLETE COST:-

The main advantage in recovering the complete cost of denominational transport would be an annual saving of £300,000 per annum which could be used to provide transport to a wider range of users. The disadvantage would be that some families may find the cost prohibitive and stop using the transport. This would then increase the costs for the remaining users and would also lead to an increase in traffic congestion as more pupils are taken to school by private car.

3.3.2 IF WE ASK FOR A CONTRIBUTION:-

The main advantage in asking for a contribution for denominational transport would be a possible annual income figure of between £45,000 and £180,000 per annum depending on the level of charge. This could be used to provide transport to a wider range of users. The main disadvantage would again be that some families may stop using the transport and the resulting increase in traffic congestion. However, as only a contribution not the full cost is considered under this option fewer families might consider stopping using the transport provided.

4. “YELLOW BUS” TRANSPORT

4.1 BACKGROUND

The idea of “yellow bus” transport is to provide transport to pupils who do not qualify under the current policy. These pupils will normally live under 3 miles from the school and not qualify for transport on hazardous route grounds. If we were to provide transport it would be sensible to concentrate on those pupils who live further than 1 mile from school as pupils under 1 mile are more likely to walk to school.

4.2 ADVANTAGES OF RUNNING A “YELLOW BUS” SCHEME

Advantages of running a “yellow bus” scheme may include:-

The provision of low cost transport to a much wider range of users than current policies allow.

A reduction in “school run” congestion.

Safe transport for children using the bus

Improvement in school attendance

4.3 DISADVANTAGES OF RUNNING A “YELLOW BUS” SCHEME

Disadvantages of running a “yellow bus” scheme may include:-

The size of the vehicles would make accessing a large number of Primary schools difficult, dangerous or impossible.

A significant increase in the cost of providing Home to School Transport.

Some pupils may be on a bus for long periods of time.

5. WHAT HAPPENS IN OTHER LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES?

5.1 DENOMINATIONAL TRANSPORT

A total of 48 LEA's have provided details of their policy on denominational transport. Of these 8 [17%] ask for a parental contribution towards the cost of denominational transport. Of the others 2 [4%] do not provide transport on denominational grounds. These two LEA's are London Boroughs where denominational transport is not an issue. The remaining 38 [79%] provide free transport to pupils who qualify. The contribution for individual pupils ranges from £200 to £300 per year. Two LEA's have decided to limit the contribution to a maximum of 2 children. Some LEA's charge per family rather than individually. This ranges from £99 to £1000 per year.

5.2 “YELLOW BUS” TRANSPORT

A total of 12 LEA's responded to the question on whether they currently provide “yellow bus” transport. Only two LEA's who replied are currently trialling the scheme and these are Bristol and West Yorkshire. The Bristol scheme was only on one route and is due to finish in the near future. A larger scheme is operated by West Yorkshire who obtained 3 years of Department for Transport funding. The scheme has been partially successful in reducing car usage but it is not yet known if it will continue in March 2007 when current funding ceases.

6. WHAT ARE WE ASKING?

We are simply asking for your view on the future provision of Home to School Transport.

1. Whether you believe denominational transport should continue to be provided as free or whether a charge should be introduced. If you feel a charge should be made we would like to know whether this should be to recover the full cost of the transport or for a contribution only.
2. We are also asking whether the provision of school transport should be extended to include a greater number of pupils who do not qualify under the current policy.
3. If there are any additional routes that may attract strong demand.

You can use the form at the back of this paper or write to us by letter or e-mail.

7. WHEN MIGHT ANY CHANGES HAPPEN?

The earliest any change to the current policy could be made is for the 2007-08 academic year. Any changes will only apply to new pupils from the start of the 2007 academic year and will not be backdated to pupils already in receipt of the service. Any new routes could be added for September 2007 for all pupils who would benefit.

NB. No charges are being considered for pupils in receipt of free school meals or those who receive free transport on distance grounds to their nearest school, hazardous route grounds or special educational needs reasons.

8. NEXT STEPS

Once this consultation is over, every form, letter and e-mail will be copied and given to members of the Council Executive.

The Executive will also receive a report prepared by Officers which summarises and highlights the issues raised during consultation. Officers will ask elected councillors to accept the report and the recommendations of Officers. It is entirely up to the members of the Executive whether they accept these recommendations or whether they want to do something else.

The Executive has to show that, when taking its decision, it has taken account of the views expressed in the consultation. It does not have to agree with those views.

IMPORTANT DATES

Consultation begins	16th January 2006
Consultation closes	24th February 2006
Council Executive	3rd May 2006.

Anyone can attend the Council Executive. If you want to speak please contact Jo Morrison on 01225 394358 she will explain the details of the public speaking scheme.

Please return the completed form opposite
by **24th February 2006** to:-

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BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT REVIEW RESPONSE FORM

1. Do you feel a charge should be made for transport to Church Schools? [St Gregory's Catholic College, St John's Catholic Primary School, St Mark's C.E. Secondary School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School].

YES NO

2. Where pupils receive transport to a non-church school as they have chosen not to attend their local Church School do you feel a charge should be made?

YES NO

3. Do you feel transport should be provided for all children regardless of the total cost to the Council?

YES NO

4. If yes to charging for denominational transport how much should the contribution be? Please tick your preferred option

- Recovery of the complete cost
- 50 pence per day per pupil = £95 per annum
- £1 per day per pupil = £190 per annum
- £1-50 per day per pupil = £285 per annum
- £2 per day per pupil = £380 per annum
- A flat rate per family

If you have ticked a flat rate per family please enter the annual amount you feel should be charged per family

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5. Is there a specific new route you feel there would be high demand for? If yes please give village or general area the route would be from and the school it would go to.

From: To:



I have the following comments

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Name

Address

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My child attends [if applicable]

Please Tick as appropriate

- I am a parent / carer of a child currently receiving free transport to a Church School
- I am a parent / carer of a child who attends a Church School but does not receive free transport
- I am a parent / carer of a child who attends a non- Church School
- I am a governor / member of staff of a Church School
- I am a governor / member of staff of a non- Church School
- I am [please specify]

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