

PASSENGER TRANSPORT POLICY

November 2002

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PREFACE

This booklet is one of a series explaining the transport policies for Poole. They are reviewed to take account of changes on Government advice and the needs and aspirations of the people of Poole.

TITLE	UPDATED
TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY	June 1999
Passenger Transport	December 1999
Cycling	December 1998
Parking	October 1995
Freight Transport	In preparation
Road Safety	November 1999
Walking	July 1999
Powered Two-Wheelers	In preparation

In addition, a number of local advice leaflets are published on transport topics:

Area Bus Map	Children: are they TRAVELSAFE?
Safety on School Buses	Cycleways in Poole
“Connect” Concessionary Travel Scheme	The Castleman Trailway
Poole Dial-a-Bus	

Individual copies of all the above can be obtained free, although a charge may be made for bulk orders. Please contact Transportation Services (01202) 262002.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Public passenger transport services are vital to Poole. For some residents, they are an essential feature of daily life, others, using their car for nearly all journeys will only use them a few times a year. Our road network is becoming increasingly congested, and we need to encourage more public transport use to protect and enhance our environment and quality of life.
- 1.2. The Council has a number of duties and powers concerning public passenger transport. In particular the 1985 Transport Act requires a published statement to detail how it proposes to secure those public passenger transport services it considers appropriate to meet any passenger needs that would otherwise not be met. The Transport Act 2000 also placed a duty on local authorities to prepare a Local Transport Plan containing general policies as to how best to carry out their functions in order to secure that:-
 - *bus services meet such of the transport requirements of persons within the authority's area the authority consider should be met by such services*
 - *bus services meeting such requirements are provided to the standards to which the authority consider should be provided*
 - *such additional facilities and services connected with bus services are provided as the authority consider should be provided*
- 1.3. Nearly all passenger transport services in Poole are provided by private companies on a commercial basis. The Council only has direct control over a small number of subsidised services which represent approximately 15% of the total, so the practical implementation of transport policies requires negotiation and partnership with transport companies. The Council believes that a good working relationship with transport providers is essential, and will actively promote this. The development of a "quality bus partnership" has already provided significant improvements for local bus passengers.
- 1.4. The Borough published a Strategy for Buses and other Public Transport Provision in the Borough of Poole in September 2002. This document reaffirmed the existing policies relating to the provision of bus services but recognised the need to update the policies. This revision brings the Passenger Transport Policy up to date and is the first revision of the original Passenger Transport Policy document published in December 1999.
- 1.5. Through its Core Value of Caring for the Environment the Council recognises that the well being of the community is dependent upon the local and global environment. The Council is committed to meet the social and economic needs of the community in partnership and in a manner which sustains the environment. Public passenger transport forms a major contribution to a sustainable transport policy.

2. **TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY**

2.1 An effective transport system is essential to the future prosperity of Poole and the quality of life for its residents. The present rapid growth in car ownership and our increasing dependence on this travel mode are beginning to pose a threat to our health and the economy and environment of our beautiful town. The challenge we now face is to develop integrated transport systems that are effective, acceptable and environmentally sustainable.

2.2 Accordingly, the Borough of Poole, in conjunction with its neighbours Dorset County Council and Bournemouth Borough Council, has adopted a transportation strategy that will pursue a co-ordinated package of education, transport and land use policies, to achieve the following aims:-

- a change in the travel behaviour of the local population and visitors, in order to reduce environmental damage, to support the local economy and to reduce injury accidents;
- maximise the capacity of the existing transport network to carry people and goods rather than vehicles;
- promotion of public transport use, cycling and walking;
- an improvement in air quality

2.3 The Strategy includes the following Key policies with regard to public transport:

- On high frequency bus routes (6 or more buses per hour, each way), traffic management and restrictions on parking and development will be applied to improve the flow and reliability of bus services.
- Public transport frequencies will be increased so that additional areas of the conurbation have a service level of 6 buses per hour to Bournemouth, Christchurch or Poole Town Centres.
- Travel information and passenger waiting facilities will be improved. Public Transport Timetables will be published which combine information from all local bus, rail and ferry operators.
- Park and ride journeys by rail into the conurbation will be promoted in conjunction with the rail operators.
- Improved direction signing, pedestrian, access and cycle facilities will be implemented at all local rail stations.
- Bus companies will be encouraged to operate vehicles which are easier for older people and people with disabilities to use.
- Special bus services will be introduced to cater for mobility impaired people.

- Major employers will be encouraged to produce travel plans which will review parking and travel arrangements at their main offices, to promote car sharing, and the use of modes other than the car.

3. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICIES**

GENERAL POLICIES

POLICY 1

The Borough of Poole will promote and facilitate public transport's contribution to a more sustainable transport policy.

- 3.1 A number of recent reports and initiatives from Central Government and other organisations (for example PPG13, the Royal Commission Report on Environmental Pollution and the development of Local Agenda 21) recognise the importance of better public transport as a key element in improving quality of life and reducing environmental damage.
- 3.2 The relative attraction in terms of convenience, comfort and perceived cost of the private car continue to be a challenge for the Council in achieving any significant shift to public transport. The Council is committed to offer public transport as a real alternative to the car. In recent years the Council has invested in bus lanes and bus priority measures at major road junctions. In addition long-stay town centre parking has been discouraged through the car park charging structure.
- 3.3 As part of its Quality Bus Partnership with the principal bus operators the Council will continue to improve the passenger's journey by providing bus priority measures where possible. It will also improve passenger waiting and information facilities.

POLICY 2

The Borough of Poole seeks to maximise the accessibility of all public transport services, but recognises the need for the provision of specialised services to meet specific needs.

- 3.4 There are many people in the community who for reasons of age or physical disability have difficulty in using ordinary bus services. The Council aims to help these people to use normal services wherever possible.
- 3.5 Tendered contracts for general passengers require buses to conform to a minimum vehicle specification and give preference to operators who can offer vehicles with additional features. The specification is based on suggestions recommended by the Government's Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and details dimensions for access, seating, handrails and other complementary features.

- 3.6 Through a Quality Partnership arrangement with the principal bus operators in the Borough, the Council will be improving bus stop facilities which will assist people with disabilities. These include raising kerbs to facilitate level access to the new low-floor buses and improving shelter provision and passenger information facilities.
- 3.7 For those unable to make use of conventional bus and train services, specialist vehicles with passenger tail-lifts are operated. Because they have to be pre-booked by telephone they are known as Dial-a-Bus services. There are currently two vehicles operating 6 days a week. Members of the Dial-a-Bus scheme are collected from their home addresses and taken to the Dolphin Centre for approximately two hours over the lunch-time period.
- 3.8 Specialised transport services such as community minibuses and community car schemes operated by loyal volunteers, can provide the solution to transport problems where a normal bus service cannot be justified and can assist people to make journeys where some special help is required from the driver.

POLICY 3

The Borough of Poole is committed to providing concessionary travel for older people in the borough and people with disabilities.

- 3.9 The Council's Concessionary Travel Scheme is available to women over 60 years and men over 65 as well as younger people with certain categories of disability. Concessionaires are currently entitled to either a voucher which can be used in part-payment for a half-fare bus pass or National Travel tokens for use on buses, trains and some taxis.
- 3.10 The scheme offers assistance with public transport for people with no transport of their own as well as an alternative for those with access to private transport facilities.

POLICY 4

The Borough of Poole is committed to promotion of all public transport services and will supplement travel information published by the operators.

- 3.11 As commercial operators, the bus companies are not required to publicise route and timetable information for other companies. Both of the principal bus operators produce comprehensive timetable guides for their own services.
- 3.12 The Borough works in partnership with Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council, Wilts & Dorset Bus Co. Ltd and Yellow Buses to produce a travel map covering the whole of the conurbation. The publication details all bus and rail services and provides a starting point for new public transport users including visitors to the area. The map also includes information about tourist attractions and details of how to obtain further information.

- 3.13 The Council is committed to improving travel information at bus stops. Improved presentation of printed material at the stops will be investigated with the bus companies.

POLICY 5

Local people with disabilities will help design improved passenger facilities and public transport information.

- 3.14 People with disabilities have special needs in accessing and using public transport. Wheelchair users are the most obvious, yet they represent only a tiny fraction of people with disabilities. Poole has pioneered the inclusion of people with disabilities in the design of transport schemes. The Disabled Design Group, formed in 1998, checks the draft designs of all Poole's highway and transport schemes, and many improved designs have resulted from their work.

POLICY 6

The Borough of Poole will co-ordinate the provision of mainstream school transport, Special Education Needs transport and Social Services transport in conjunction with general public transport to ensure that the best overall value for money is obtained.

- 3.15 It is a statutory requirement for the Council to provide assistance with transport for scholars up to school leaving age who live over a defined distance from their catchment area school. It is also the duty of the council to undertake this service in the various circumstances where the available walking routes under these prescribed distances have been designated as hazardous. This transport is funded by the Education Committee and organised on their behalf by the Head of Transportation Services. In this way school transport can be arranged to use existing commercial public transport services wherever possible, and contracted services can be designed to meet both school and general public transport needs as efficiently as possible.
- 3.16 The integration of Special Needs transport and Social Services transport offers further co-ordination benefits and ensures that best value for money is obtained over all types of transport provision, as required of the Council by Section 88 of the 1985 Transport Act.

4. BUSES AND TAXIS

POLICY 7

The Borough of Poole will seek to secure a Quality Bus Partnership with the major providers of local bus services.

- 4.1 The deregulation of bus services introduced by the 1985 Transport act means that local authorities have very little influence over the services that are provided commercially. It is important that the local authority and bus operators have a good working relationship. Recent Government advice stresses the value of Quality Bus Partnerships where authorities and operators each publicly declare their contributions to improved passenger transport.
- 4.2 The Poole-Canford Heath services are good example of the partnership in action with Wilts & Dorset. The operator provided increased frequency services and new low floor buses. The Council provided raised kerbs and bus shelters, and the cost of introducing real time information at bus stops was shared.

POLICY 8

The Borough of Poole will secure the provision of those non-commercial bus services which contribute to meeting social need and are considered to give best value for money within available resources.

- 4.3 Bus deregulation, arising from the 1985 Transport Act, introduced a framework for the provision of local bus services in which bus companies are free to concentrate on operating profitable commercial services. A number of routes in the Borough, principally evenings and Sundays, are not profitable and are operated with financial support from the Council.
- 4.4 All subsidised services are assessed on a continuing basis and are ranked according to the category of service and are given the following priority:
- a) work
 - b) education
 - c) medical
 - d) shopping
 - e) leisure
- 4.5 A subsidy of £2.00 per passenger trip (at October 1998 prices) has been established as a 'benchmark' for subsidy and any contract where this support is exceeded is reviewed on the basis of service type and the availability of alternatives.
- 4.6 Subsidised bus services that cross the Borough's boundaries are provided in conjunction with neighbouring authorities on a pro-rata funding basis. Usually the authority with the most route mileage takes the lead in arranging the contract.
- 4.7 The level of fares charged on supported services is generally in line with average commercial fares in the area of operation. Accompanied children under the age of 5 are carried free of charge and children aged 5-13 inclusive are charged half the adult fare.

POLICY 9

The Borough of Poole will meet on a trial basis reasonable requests for bus services which would otherwise not be provided, including services that help to reduce congestion and contribute to improvements in the environment. Where the performance justifies, such services will be considered for more permanent support.

- 4.8 The Council receives requests for new bus services. These may be from areas where there are currently no services or where there is an inadequate level of service being provided. Such requests are passed on to the bus companies for their consideration to provide either a new service on a commercial basis or to extend/divert an existing service to meet the request.
- 4.9 If the bus companies are not able to meet the requests on a commercial basis the Council may wish to support their introduction on a trial basis. The Public Transport Consultative Group considers such requests, as well as other public transport issues, and make recommendations to the Council's Planning and Transportation Committee. If shown to perform better than existing services under review, the new experimental services could justify more permanent support.

POLICY 10

The Borough of Poole will continue to secure the provision of transport for fare-paying scholars who are not entitled to assistance under the Council's School Transport Policy, according to the priorities used for other types of non-commercial bus services.

- 4.10 Children may not qualify for assistance with transport to school either because they live under the statutory distances (2 miles for ages 4-8 and 3 miles for ages 8-16) or because they are attending a non-catchment area school.
- 4.11 The Education Act 1980 and the Education Reform Act 1988 have strengthened the right of parents to choose a school for their child. As a result children's journeys are often outside established local travel patterns and the only alternative is the private car.
- 4.12 Increasing levels of car-ownership together with parents' perceived danger of the walking route to school has resulted in a significant increase in car journeys to school in recent years. This has increased traffic congestion, particularly around schools, and associated problems of atmospheric pollution and road accidents. Children are more than twice as likely to be injured on their journey to/from school when travelling by car than by bus.
- 4.13 Current work being undertaken on 'Safe routes to Schools' aims to identify areas where improvements can be made to personal safety on the route to school. This will largely be in the form of enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists but could identify demands for public transport services. In this situation it may be appropriate to make changes to existing transport arrangements or to introduce additional services, initially on an experimental basis.

POLICY 11

On local bus services operated under contract to the Borough the Council will allow free travel for children up to their fifth birthday and

charge half fares up to their fourteenth birthday. Bus companies will be encouraged to offer child fair reduction on their commercial services.

- 4.14 Bus companies are required to charge half fares at all times for children up to their 14th birthday and allow free travel for those under the age of 5 on contracted services. On commercial services bus companies are responsible for setting the level of child discount and the concession offered differ between operators.

POLICY 12

The Council will encourage the inter-availability of return tickets and through-ticketing arrangements between different bus operators.

- 4.15 Although some through-ticketing arrangements exist within individual bus company operations there are currently no such arrangements between different operators, nor are there any facilities for return tickets to be inter-available between operators. The Council recognises the value of such arrangements to the bus passenger and will encourage the bus companies to introduce these.

POLICY 13

The Council will investigate opportunities for the introduction of park & ride facilities and identify suitable sites in the Borough.

- 4.16 A site at Marshes End, Creekmoor has been identified as a suitable location for the Borough's first park & ride. Detailed design work is currently underway with a proposed implementation date of 2002.

POLICY 14

The Borough will investigate the opportunity to upgrade the Bus Station facility in partnership with Wilts & Dorset Bus Company and town centre land-owners.

- 4.17 The Borough of Poole recognises the importance of the Bus Station as a principal passenger facility and a 'gateway' to the town for many visitors. It's location as part of the Dolphin Centre shopping complex provides a convenient boarding, alighting and interchange point where passengers can pick up information and use other facilities such as shops and toilets.
- 4.18 There is an urgent need to improve the attractiveness of the bus station as a passenger waiting facility to encourage more passengers to use public transport services. The ownership of the Bus Station lies with Wilts & Dorset Bus Company although the shop frontage area is public highway.

POLICY 15

The Borough of Poole will continue to regulate the operation of taxi and

private hire services within the Borough to maintain a safe and reliable standard of operation.

- 4.19 Taxis and private hire vehicles form an essential part of the public transport network in the Borough. They provide services at times and between places not covered by the general public transport provision. It is essential, however, that their operation is regulated to maintain the high standards of safety and reliability.
- 4.20 The legislation covering taxi licensing allows the Borough, as the licensing authority, to introduce Bylaws and conditions to regulate the quality and appearance of vehicles used as taxis as well as setting and controlling the fares charged. Conditions are also applied to driver's licences to allow medical and criminal record checks and all potential drivers are tested on their knowledge of the Borough before a licence is granted.
- 4.21 The Borough wishes to promote wheelchair accessible vehicles and has recently authorised an additional three Hackney plates for vehicles suitable for the carriage of passengers in their wheelchairs.
- 4.22 The Borough is committed to full consultation with the taxi trade through a series of meetings with trade representatives and improvements such as new annual Identity Cards and the introduction of a dress code have resulted.

5. RAIL

POLICY 16

- 5.1 **The Councils support the retention and development of the rail network for passenger and freight use. They will actively seek improvements to both services and infrastructure in partnership with the rail industry and other local authorities.**
- 5.2 Most rail services cross local authority boundaries, so it is sensible for groups of authorities to work together in developing their rail policies and proposals. The Joint Member Transport Policy Group has recently agreed a number of common rail policies between Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset. Most of these common policies contain the phrase "the Councils will".
- 5.3 The London-Weymouth railway line is an underused transport asset passing through the most congested areas of S.E Dorset conurbation. It is sensible and sustainable to intensify use of this railway.

5.1 Stations

POLICY 17

The Councils will seek improved passenger facilities at stations, and in particular provision for people with disabilities and cyclists.

POLICY 18

The Councils will identify opportunities for reopening or the provision of new stations.

- 5.2 Stations are where customers access the rail network, and where people change from one mode of transport to another. The stations are owned by Railtrack, but leased to the major train operator. For Poole's four stations, this is South West Trains.
- 5.3 The major restructuring of the rail industry has required new relationships to be set up with the rail companies. The Councils now have regular liaison meetings with South West Trains, and are progressing a number of station and service improvements.

Service Developments

POLICY 19

The Councils will work with other transport providers to achieve effective inter linking at rail stations and promote through ticketing.

POLICY 20

The Councils will promote rail-based park and ride, especially for commuting to the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation.

- 5.5 Rail services are primarily used for longer journeys, and commuting from Poole to Southampton and London is significant. Improvements to the speed and quality of the fast services to London and Birmingham are desirable, and are likely to be provided by the rail operators by 2003. In contrast, development of rail for local journeys offers only limited revenue to rail operators, and will need strong promotion and some financial support by the local authorities.
- 5.6 The Councils see development of local rail in three phases:-
- i.) 0-5 years market spare capacity on existing train service.
 - ii.) 5-10 years enhanced local train service
 - iii.) 10 + years rapid transit scheme (Dorset Area Rapid Transit Scheme - DARTS)

Working with South West Trains to promote local rail travel involves general marketing and fare promotion, and the development of park and ride. Two policies have been adopted.

POLICY 21

The Councils support the development of the Swanage branch line and its reconnection to the national rail network, and improvements to the South Coast Rail route, which has Trans European Network status.

- 5.7 The Swanage Railway operate steam trains for tourists, and with the Norden Park and Ride site have made a significant contribution to sustainable transport in the Isle of Purbeck. The Purbeck Rail Partnership seeks to promote the further development of the Swanage Railway, with the objective of achieving an hourly service between Swanage and Bournemouth/Poole.

General

- 5.8 The line along the South Coast has T.E.N status (Trans-European Network). East of Southampton the route is relatively low speed, and there are many level crossings and other constraints. The Bournemouth - Gatwick - Victoria service uses this route. The local authorities along the South Coast have funded studies into improving this rail route.
- 5.9 Policies concerning the carriage of goods by rail and intermodal terminals are listed with the council's freight policies.

6. FERRIES

POLICY 22

Adequate and appropriate direction signing will be provided for users of Poole's ferry services.

POLICY 23

The Borough of Poole will work with the Purbeck Heritage Committee and the ferry company to manage access to the Isle of Purbeck, and will continue to provide priority access to the Sandbanks ferry terminal for local bus services.

- 6.1 There are three different types of ferry service in Poole:-

- i.) the cross-Channel ferries to France and the Channel Islands.
- ii.) ferries from the Quay and Sandbanks to Brownsea Island.
- iii.) the Sandbanks - Shell Bay chain ferry.

Only (iii) is used by local residents for daily work journeys, and all the ferries are busiest in the summer tourist peak. The operating environment involves Poole Harbour Commissioners rather than the Council, but there are issues, like signing and access, where the highway authority is involved.

