Sewta
Moving People Yn Symud Pobl

Sewta Bus and Community Transport Regional Network Strategy

January 2014

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. The provision of an effective transport network is essential to provide access to employment, education and a range of services and facilities. Whilst the private car is the dominant mode of travel[1], access to a car isn't universal, which can lead to social inequality. In addition, car use is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Accordingly the Welsh Government and Sewta have developed a number of policies to promote the use of alternatives including public transport.

1.1.2. Bus and community transport services provide the larger part of the public transport system, providing greater network coverage and flexibility compared to the rail network. More than 80% of all public transport journeys in Wales involve local buses[2];

1.1.3. Whilst the existing network facilitates access to employment, education and a range of services and facilities in the region, there is variability in the provision of services and infrastructure. In addition, greater pressure on Welsh Government budgets requires an increase in the amount of fare box revenue to maintain service stability and network coverage. Although the bus network itself cannot influence ***why*** people travel, it can influence ***how*** people travel; therefore the ability to attract users from other modes is critical to increase patronage and revenue.

1.1.4. The bus network and service provision is the responsibility of a number of stakeholders; therefore the challenge for Sewta is to work in partnership to maximise efficiency and stimulate passenger growth, whilst also retaining existing users.

1.1.5. From 1 April 2013, the four Regional Transport Consortia have been responsible for administering the Welsh Government's replacement funding scheme for bus and community transport services – the Regional Transport Services Grant (RTSG). A condition of the award of RTSG funding to Sewta[3] was that it engages with interested parties and key stakeholders to develop a Bus and Community Transport Regional Network Strategy. This provided an opportunity for Sewta to review its bus and community transport policies and actions set out in the Regional Transport Plan.

1.1.6. Following publication of its draft strategy in July 2013 a 12-week consultation exercise was undertaken, which informed the development of this strategy document. The consultation process is detailed in a separate consultation report[4].

1.1.7. The Sewta Bus and Community Transport Strategy document sets out the vision and objectives developed in partnership by the Sewta authorities, bus operators and the Community Transport Association (CTA Wales). It highlights the key challenges facing the regions bus network and explains Sewta's plans to further develop bus and

[1] http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/personal-travel/?lang=en.
[2] Welsh Government http://cymru.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2013/130924-monitoring-national-transport-plan-update-2012-en.pdf
[3] The South East Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta) is the Regional Transport Consortium covering the local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and Vale of Glamorgan. Sewta is a local government Joint Committee charged with preparing and coordinating regional transport policies, plans and programmes on behalf of its constituent councils – please refer to www.sewta.gov.uk/aboutus.
[4] Sewta Bus and Community Transport Strategy – Consultation Report

community transport provision across the region over the next five years. The implementation programme will be reviewed in 2014/15.

1.2. The Regional Context

1.2.1. South East Wales is the most densely populated and urbanised region in Wales, home to nearly 1.5 million residents. Containing the cities of Cardiff and Newport, it also exhibits great contrasts in terms of geography, culture, and prosperity. These contrasts are often characterised by the distinction between the coastal cities and settlements, the South Wales Valleys, and the region's rural areas.

1.2.2. The variances in topography and population density make it difficult to develop a 'one size fits all' strategy. Therefore the development of measures is likely to require a degree of flexibility.

1.2.3. The bus network is the dominant mode of public transport in Wales, accounting for approximately 116 million journeys, compared to 27 million rail journeys in 2011/12[5]. Although bus travel totals disaggregated to consortia level are not available, monitoring exercises have recorded in excess of 60 million bus journeys per annum in the Sewta region[6], compared to almost 15 million rail journeys.

1.2.4. The de-regulation of bus services outside London under the 1985 Transport Act created a fundamental change in service delivery to the travelling public. The Act split the provision of bus infrastructure (such as bus stops and bus stations) from the planning and operation of services, with the commercial sector expected to provide the majority of services.

1.2.5. Although there is no statutory duty to provide subsidised local bus services, local authorities have discretion to support bus and other public transport services that best meet local needs, take account of social inclusion, improve accessibility and increase their attractiveness as a primary travel choice.

1.2.6. The Transport Acts of 1985 and 2000, and the Local Transport Act 2008 recognise that some bus routes may not be commercially viable. The role of the local authority is therefore to identify where gaps exist, and exercise their powers to provide services that are deemed to be socially necessary.

1.2.7. As a result of these legislative changes, the delivery of bus services and infrastructure is the responsibility of a number of organisations. These include:

- *Welsh Government* – determines policy and overall funding resources.
- *Regional Transport Consortia* – develop regional strategies and administer Regional Transport Services Grant.
- *Local authorities* – procure and financially support socially necessary services. Act as highway authority responsible for traffic management, administer the concessionary travel scheme; provide and maintain bus stop infrastructure; provide roadside and other information. Some councils are responsible for parking enforcement.
- *Bus operators* – plan and operate bus services, set fares, and provide timetable and other information. The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) is the trade organisation representing most operators.

[5] http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/transport/?lang=en
[6] Bus and rail patronage in the Sewta region, Capita Symonds 2012.

- *Community Transport operators* - plan and operate flexible community transport services. The Community Transport *Association* is the representative body for community transport operators and a designated body for the issuing of section 19 permits.
- *Traveline Cymru*– provides phone and web based public transport information.
- *Gwent and South Wales Police* – responsible for enforcing moving traffic offences.
- *Traffic Commissioner* – responsible for licensing bus operators.

1.2.8. This illustrates the complex structure of planning and delivering bus and community transport services. Accordingly, this strategy has been prepared through partnership working with key stakeholders, and forms the foundation for wider consultation and engagement.

1.2.9. There are currently 516 registered bus routes operated in the Sewta region. Of these 55% are fully commercial, 11% receive a partial subsidy and 32% are fully subsidised. In terms of actual mileage operated however, it is estimated over 80% is operated on a commercial basis.

1.2.10. The current network is illustrated in figure 1.1, which illustrate Monday to Saturday daytime services and Figure 1.2, which illustrates Sunday services.

1.2.11. There are 34 bus operating companies and a number of Community Transport groups operating in the Sewta region. These can be categorised into four main types by ownership:

- *Municipally Owned – operated at 'arms length' from the local authority, who is the only shareholder, E.g. Cardiff Bus and Newport Bus*
- *National groups – companies that are part of larger privately owned groups, for example First Cymru and Stagecoach in South Wales*
- *Independents – Companies owned by individuals, operating exclusively in the South Wales area, for example, Edwards Coaches, NAT Group, Harris Coaches and Phil Anslow Travel.*
- *Community Transport Organisations – operating under Section 19 or Section 22 Permits.*

1.2.12. The resulting market structure is a key influence on the provision of bus services in the region, as the high proportion of commercially viable routes combined with a diverse range of operators' results in a highly competitive environment. As a result of the threat of actual competition there is pressure to prevent significant increases in fares. This is illustrated by the relative cost of day tickets between towns and cities in the Sewta region and elsewhere.

1.2.13. It is noted that taxis play a vital role in extending the reach of the public transport network at times of the day where there isn't a connecting bus or community transport service. Whilst authorities have the option to procure Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles to undertake scheduled or demand responsive services, there are no such services in operation in the region in receipt of RTSG funding. As a result issues surrounding taxis and Private Hire Vehicles are a lower priority and will be addressed in a further iteration of the strategy.

Sewta
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Regional Bus & Train Network

Monday to Saturday daytime as at November 2013

to Brecon, Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells & Newtown
to Brecon
to Hereford
to Hereford
to Ross on Wye
to Coleford
to Neath and/or Swansea
to Neath and/or Swansea
to Lydney
to Gloucester
to Bristol Parkway
to Cribbs Causeway & Bristol
to Bristol
Glynneath
Hirwaun
Merthyr Tydfil
Tredegar
Rhymney
Brynmawr
Ebbw Vale
Blaenavon
Abergavenny
Monmouth
Raglan
Trellech
Tintern
Usk
Pontypool
Abertillery
Bedlinog
Aberdare
Blaenrhondda & Blaencwm
Maerdy
Mountain Ash
Bargoed
Blackwood
Newbridge
Treharris
Nelson
Ystrad Mynach
Abercynon
Treorci
Cymer
Blaengarw
Nantymoel
Maesteg
Port Talbot
Tonypandy
Porth
Pontypridd
Risca
Caerphilly
Cwmbran
proposed
Chepstow
Caerleon
Caerwent
Magor
Caldicot
Newport
Tonyrefail
Church Village
Talbot Green
Gwaun Miskin
Llanharan
Pyle
Sarn
Pencoed
Pontyclun
UHW Heath Hospital
Bridgend
Porthcawl
Cowbridge
Cardiff city centre
Cardiff Bay
Penarth
Dinas Powys
St. Athan
Cardiff Airport
Llantwit Major
Rhoose
Barry

KEY

- Bus route (various colours - see frequency guide)
- Railway line (various colours - see frequency
- Town or interchange point
- Railway Station
- Railway Station served by a limited number of trains
- Sewta area
- Enterprise Zone
- Hospital

Frequency

- Less than hourly
- At least hourly
- At least 2 buses/trains per hour
- At least 3/4/5 buses/trains per hour
- At least 6+ buses/trains per hour

Local/Town networks are not shown

Sewta
Moving People Yn Symud Pobl

Regional Bus & Train Network

Sundays as at November 2013

to Brecon, Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells & Newtown

to Hereford

to Neath and/or Swansea

Glynneath
Merthyr Tydfil
Rhymney
Tredegar
Ebbw Vale
Brynmawr
Blaenavon
Abergavenny
Monmouth
Raglan
Hirwaun
Abertillery
Trellech
Bedlinog
Aberdare
Blaenrhondda & Blaencwm
Maerdy
Mountain Ash
Bargoed
Pontypool
Usk
Tintern
Blackwood
Newbridge
Treharris
Cymer
Treorci
Abercynon
Nelson
Cwmbran
proposed
Chepstow
to Gloucester
Ystrad Mynach
Blaengarw
Nantymoel
Risca
Porth
Tonypandy
Caerleon
Caerwent
Maesteg
Pontypridd
Caerphilly
Magor
Caldicot
Port Talbot
Tonyrefail
Newport
Church Village
Talbot Green
Llanharan
Gwaun Miskin
Pyle
Sarn
UHW Heath Hospital
to Bristol Parkway
Pencoed
Pontyclun
to Cribbs Causeway & Bristol
Bridgend
Cardiff city centre
to Bristol
Porthcawl
Cardiff Bay
Cowbridge
Penarth
Dinas Powys
St. Athan
Cardiff Airport
Llantwit Major
Rhoose
Barry

KEY

- Bus route (various colours - see frequency guide)
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- At least 6+ buses/trains per hour

Local/Town networks are not shown

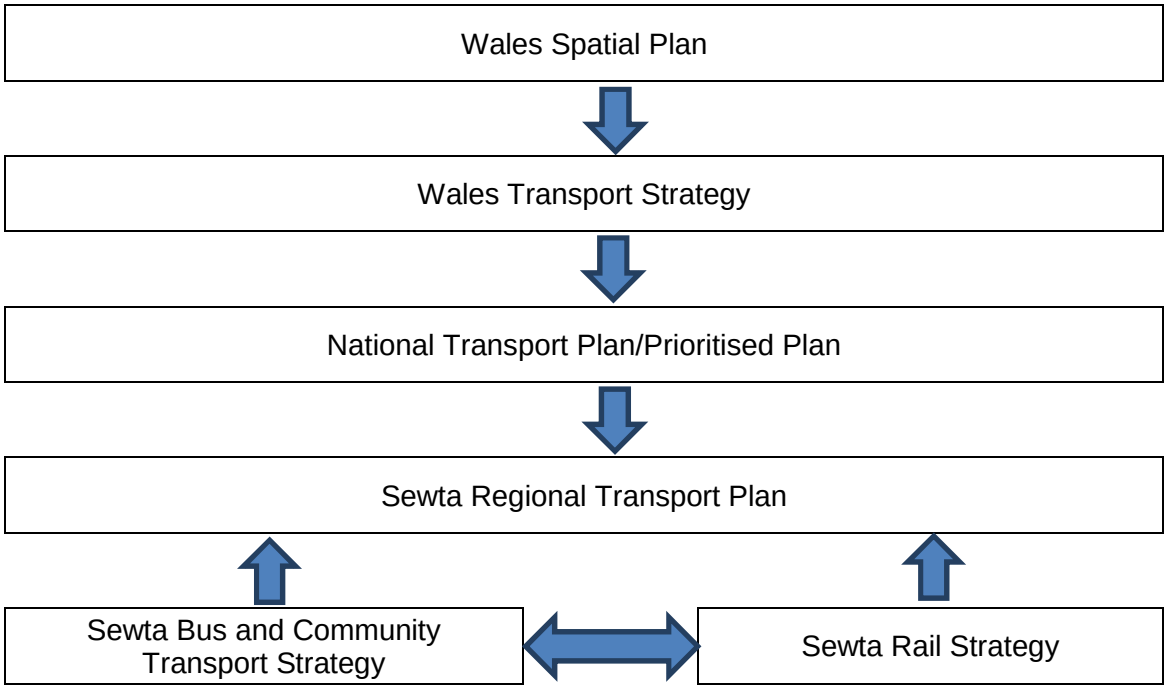
1.3. Policy Context

1.3.1. The Sewta Bus and Community Transport Strategy has been developed within the Welsh Transport policy framework. This is set out in the following key documents:

- *Wales Spatial Plan (updated 2008) – Sets out cross-cutting national spatial priorities to inform development of local and regional polices.*
- *Wales Transport Strategy 2010 - Identifies a series of high-level transport outcomes and sets out the steps to their delivery.*
- *National Transport Plan (NTP) 2010 and Prioritised NTP 2011 – Provides an implementation plan for delivering the Wales Transport Strategy. Re-prioritisation exercise completed in 2011.*
- *Sewta Regional Transport Plan (RTP) – Outlines delivery of regional elements of the WTS. Further details provided in section 1.3.3.*
- *Sewta Rail Strategy – Outlines rail related elements of the RTP.*

1.3.2. The relationship of these documents is illustrated in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Policy Context



National Transport Plan

1.3.3. The National Transport Plan details the Welsh Government's approach to ensuring that transport can continue to support sustainable economic development and social inclusion, whilst at the same time putting it onto a carbon reduction pathway. The plan contains five strategic priorities:

- *Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts.*
- *Integrating local transport.*
- *Improving access between key settlements and sites.*
- *Enhancing international connectivity.*
- *Increasing safety and security.*

1.3.4. These themes have been considered in the development of the Sewta Bus and Community Transport Strategy. By improving the bus and community transport network, Sewta will also assist the delivery of wider policy agendas. These include:

- *City Regions Task Force recommendations.*
- *National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee inquiry into Integrated Public Transport recommendations.*
- *South East Wales Integrated Task Force recommendations.*
- *Sewta Metro Plus proposals.*
- *Bus Funding Review Steering Group outcomes.*
- *Silk Commission findings.*
- *Programme for Government.*

Regional Transport Plan

1.3.5. The overarching transport objectives for the region are set out in the Regional Transport Plan (RTP), the statutory transport strategy for Sewta and its ten constituent councils.

1.3.6. The RTP notes that the ease or difficulty with which people can travel to places of employment, local services and education, health and leisure facilities, shopping or to see family and friends is fundamental to their quality of life. The RTP vision describes the (transport) world to which we aspire. It provides a focus and motivation for all stakeholders involved its delivery: The RTP vision is:

> ***A modern, accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system for South East Wales which increases opportunity, promotes prosperity for all and protects the environment; where walking, cycling, public transport, and sustainable freight provide real travel alternatives.***

1.3.7. The RTP acknowledges that transport is a key facilitator; it exists within the wider contexts of society. Transport affects, and is affected by a number of other government policies, especially those on planning, economic development, social inclusion and equality, and the environment.

1.3.8. The RTP was adopted in March 2010 and is due to expire in 2015. The development of the Sewta Bus and Community Transport Strategy will inform the planned refresh of the RTP for adoption in 2015.

Local Development Plans

1.3.9. In addition to the national and regional policies outlines, there are a number of transport related polices contained within the Local Development plans of each constituent Sewta authority. These will reflect local considerations and contain policies relating to external sources of funding.

2. Strategy Objectives and Outcomes

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Whilst the existing bus and community transport network facilitates access to employment, education and a range of services and facilities in the region, there is variability in the provision of services and infrastructure. In addition, greater pressure on Welsh Government budgets requires an increase in the amount of fare box revenue to maintain service stability and network coverage.

2.1.2. Whilst one option to increase fare box revenue would be to raise fares, there is a risk this would reduce the competitiveness of bus and community transport services with other modes and/or penalise those members of society who rely on bus services to such an extent they may no longer be able to afford to travel when required. This situation could result in an overall reduction in patronage that outweighs the forecast increase in fare box revenue. Such a situation would also increase the risk of a reduction in network coverage.

2.1.3. Latest information from the Department of Transport[7] indicates since 1997 bus fares have increased faster than the cost of living. In contrast, the cost of motoring has reduced relative to the cost of living.

2.1.4. Accordingly the preferred strategy is to identify and address the barriers that currently restrict bus and community transport use and to improve the efficiency of the network. To this end, seven objectives have been defined, which also reflect the overarching objectives of the Sewta RTP. These are:

Objective 1 - To provide and promote safe, attractive and accessible bus and community transport links to key regional centres and destinations.

2.1.5. People need to travel to access key services and facilities, including healthcare, education, employment, wellbeing and leisure facilities. The need to travel is often exacerbated where facilities, such as healthcare and education are rationalised. Whilst such consolidation provides benefits for the organisation concerned, it does increase the need to travel; therefore transport requirements should be considered from the outset.

2.1.6. The bus and community transport network plays a critical role in facilitating access to such facilities for people who don't have access to a car, or are seeking an alternative, more sustainable means of travel.

2.1.7. The Wales Spatial Plan identifies 14 key settlements in the Sewta Region, with the RTP noting the importance of supporting core locations. These are listed in Appendix A. At a base level, the region's bus and community transport network must facilitate access between these locations. The bus network must also be attractive, without barriers such as fear of crime, lack of physical accessibility or affordability.

Objective 2 - To maximise opportunities to maintain and stimulate passenger growth.

[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263711/tsgb1308.xls

2.1.8. Monitoring undertaken by the Department for Transport[8] indicates that bus patronage in Wales has been declining since peaking at 124 million journeys per annum in 2008/09. However in South East Wales it has been increasing, with major operators recording some growth in passenger numbers in that period.

2.1.9. In view of the recent reductions in the level of bus funding support, there is a greater emphasis on the importance of fare revenue. Whilst an increase in fares may achieve this, it is likely to deter some users, with the risk of an associated reduction in overall revenue; therefore the preferred approach is to stimulate an increase in the number of passengers carried through a range of measures including the extension of more affordable fares and ticketing products. This approach will help to support the investment and service development programmes for the bus and community transport operators.

Objective 3 - To improve the quality and efficiency of bus and community transport services.

2.1.10. Given the requirement to increase the number of users, it is essential that services are competitive with other modes of transport, including the private car. This will only be achieved if the quality of service at all points of the journey is commensurate with user expectation.

2.1.11. Whilst such quality enhancements are critical, these must be achieved against the backdrop of a reduced level of funding. Therefore, there is a requirement to make efficiency savings that can be reinvested into the network. The highway authorities and the regional capital programme also have a role to play in helping to reduce journey times and to increase reliability.

Objective 4 - To address exclusion from the core network through the most appropriate mode, including the use of flexible bus services, community transport and services operated by taxi and private hire vehicles.

2.1.12. Whilst there is a good level of accessibility within the Sewta region (refer section 3.5.7), a number of people do not enjoy access to the core network due to geographical remoteness and/or reduced mobility. In order to address the needs of these users, flexible bus services, including community and demand responsive transport have an important part to play.

2.1.13. Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles also extend the reach of the public transport network. Currently these are provided on a fully commercial basis[9], with no subsidy from Sewta; Therefore Sewta currently has limited legal or financial ability to influence taxi and private hire vehicle services.

2.1.14. It is however imperative that opportunities for the physical integration of bus and taxi/Private Hire Vehicles are provided at regional interchanges (refer BCT38).

Objective 5 - To encourage partnership working, including in information provision, ticketing and service provision.

[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/43323/bus0106.csv

[9] Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles provide some contracted services for education departments, such as Special Educational Needs; however these are not public services

2.1.15. There are a number of organisations that are responsible for the delivery of the bus product (refer section 1.2.7). There is a risk that the objectives and priorities of these may be inconsistent, to the potential detriment of users. Accordingly, strong, voluntary partnerships are the best way to achieve mutual objectives, and these form a critical element of the strategy.

Objective 6 - To ensure buses and community transport play their full role within the Cardiff Capital Region Metro Proposals.

2.1.16. The bus and community transport network is the backbone of the wider national and regional public transport network. The integration of complementary modes, such as rail and park & ride offers the ability to provide wider geographical coverage, which could generate additional public transport trips.

2.1.17. The Welsh Government has recently announced its intention to develop the metro concept in south east Wales, which proposes a fully integrated transport system that enables users to make seamless transition between modes and services. Key elements include integration of ticketing, information, high quality infrastructure and 'turn up and go' service frequencies.

2.1.18. The bus and community transport network provides the ability to service large areas of the region which are not accessible by rail; therefore these services play a critical role in the achievement of the metro vision.

Objective 7 -To provide a foundation for bus infrastructure and bus services enhancement programmes.

2.1.19. The effective operation of the bus network relies on the provision of supporting infrastructure, including interchanges, bus stops, bus shelters, junction improvements and bus priority measures. It is essential such capital investment is targeted in those areas where there is a need to address existing issues (such as service reliability) or attract new users (e.g. the provision of high quality bus interchanges).

2.1.20. The Sewta RTP includes a programme of capital measures, which are designed to assist the movement of buses and increase physical accessibility for users. These are based on the key regional corridors which were identified during the development of the RTP. These will be kept under review to reflect changes in land use or traffic volumes.

2.1.21. The provision of such infrastructure programmes can provide a catalyst for the creation of quality bus corridors, which could include service enhancements, such as new vehicles or increased frequency.

3. Issues and Principles

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. Stakeholder and public engagement activities identified a number of barriers and issues that either prevent the use of the bus and community transport network or reduce its competitiveness with other modes (including the private car). This section outlines these issues and the corresponding action Sewta intends to take to address them.

3.2. Reliability and Punctuality

3.2.1. The results of the Sewta public questionnaire survey identified bus service reliability as the most important aspect when deciding whether to use the bus. It was also the top priority for investment in the bus and community transport network in South East Wales. This is consistent with the results of surveys undertaken by Passenger Focus and the Welsh Government survey of bus passengers in Wales in 2010.

3.2.2. All operators aim to run their registered services to their published timetables. The Traffic Commissioners are the regulators of local bus services, and can take action against operators who fail to do so. These powers can include the imposition of financial penalties, removing existing registrations or preventing operators from registering new services.

3.2.3. Traffic Commissioners have set a target whereby 95% of services should depart from stated timing points within the bracket of up to one minute early and up to five minutes late. Traffic Commissioners expect 95% of services to arrive at the final destination point no more than five minutes late. These standards are currently being reviewed by the Traffic Commissioner, including the removal of the '1 minute early' allowance.

3.2.4. While accepting that there will be short-term difficulties that may cause delays, operators must construct their timetables to take account of known peaks of congestion and other factors. To help maintain reliability of bus services, vehicles must be maintained to a good state of repair and there must be adequate numbers of staff available to drive them. Bus punctuality can be influenced by a variety of factors, including:

- Traffic volumes.
- Road capacity.
- Junction design.
- Parking and loading restrictions.
- Road works.
- Level of bus priority.
- Enforcement.

3.2.5. A number of other events, some of which are difficult to anticipate, can also play their part, for example:

- Road traffic accidents.
- Emergency utility works.
- Adverse weather conditions.
- Major events – in particular those that require highway closures.

BCT1 Sewta supports further bus priority, and will work with member authorities, operators, bus user representatives, the Traffic Commissioner, parking enforcement authorities and Welsh Government to develop measures to reduce bus journey times and improve reliability and punctuality.

BCT2 Through its capital programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for bus priority measures, including bus lanes, bus gates and junction priority measures

Enforcement of moving and stationary traffic offences

3.2.6. Traffic congestion may be caused by sheer volume, but on many occasions it is due to vehicles illegally parked or contravening traffic orders. Buses are also delayed where bus priority measures are abused by other vehicles. It is also noted there are variances in the operating hours that are applied to bus priority measures (for example some are operational 24 hours a day, with others operating during peak hours only). This can result in confusion that dilutes their effectiveness.

3.2.7. The enforcement of stationary and moving traffic offences has historically been the responsibility of the police. Given the many other requirements placed on the police, enforcement has not been a priority, leading to widespread abuse of traffic orders in some areas.

3.2.8. Local authorities have, for many years, been able to apply for the power for the civil enforcement of parking restrictions, such that civilian staff can enforce parking restrictions in place of traffic wardens. Such measures have been successfully introduced in Cardiff in 2011, in Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2012 and in Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan in 2013. More recently the Welsh Government has enacted legislation to enable the civil enforcement of moving traffic offences. This will enable local authority staff to enforce such things as bus lanes, restricted turning movements and box junctions. Additionally, images from on-bus CCTV systems can also be used to identify offending vehicles.

3.2.9. Newport Transport has taken a pro-active approach to the enforcement of stationary traffic offences by contracting the services of four dedicated Police Community Support Officers with Traffic Warden Powers. Their deployment was accompanied by a successful press campaign that has increased their deterrent effect.

BCT3 Sewta supports the installation and use of fixed and bus mounted CCTV to enforce compliance with Bus Lane and Bus Stop Clearway Orders

BCT4 Sewta supports the deployment of designated enforcement officers at locations where there is persistent abuse of existing Traffic Orders.

3.3. Information and Marketing

3.3.1. The provision of good quality, accurate and easily accessible information is crucial for encouraging passenger growth and retaining exiting customers. Information should aim to cover as many formats as possible to ensure maximum coverage both geographically and socially. This also includes the provision of bi-lingual information, in compliance with the relevant legislation.

3.3.2. The issues associated with the provision of information are wide ranging and complex; therefore this section provides an overview of the pertinent issues

3.3.3. Information requirements can be categorised according to journey phase:

- Journey planning – information required in advance of travel, such as stop location, bus service number, forthcoming service changes, special events, fares, service departure and arrival times.
- At stop/interchange – information to reassure users or notify of any incidents that will affect reliability.
- On-board information – maps, audio/visual announcements.
- Onward journey information, such as local area maps, connecting service information.

3.3.4. In addition the provision of information can also be used as a marketing tool to raise awareness. Information provision can take a number of forms including:

- Timetable booklets.
- Printed at stop information.
- Real Time at stop.
- Web based information.
- Telephone / mobile / smartphone information.
- Face to face, e.g. travel shops or staffed interchanges.
- Social Media.

3.3.5. Bus and community transport information is currently provided by a number of stakeholders, including:

- Traveline Cymru.
- Bus and Community Transport operators.
- Local authorities.

3.3.6. Currently there are a number of variances in the type of information provided. Whilst Traveline Cymru is the primary source of web and phone based information, this is often supplemented by the operators' and local authority equivalents. Similarly the production of printed timetable information varies between operators and local authorities.

3.3.7. Although the use of smartphone technology offers a number of advantages, including live travel information or applications to increase accessibility, there is recognition that not all users will have access to devices, or there may be locations that do not have suitable coverage. Therefore it is important to retain traditional methods of providing information. This is supported by the results of surveys by Bus Users UK in Wales and Welsh Government[10] that identified the single most important way in which passengers find out about bus services is at the bus stop.

3.3.8. The results of the Sewta questionnaire identified the provision of printed timetable information at bus stops as the third most important aspect when deciding whether to use the bus. It was also identified as the third highest priority for investment in the bus and community transport network. Data from Traveline Cymru indicates there are 9,389 bus stops in the Sewta region (a breakdown by authority is contained in appendix B).

3.3.9. The provision of 'at stop' information[11] is not consistent across the region due to varying responsibilities and funding availability. There is the potential for this function to be provided on a regional basis, to provide consistency and a common style. This would be achieved through the establishment of a core team / shared service

[10] Bus Passenger Survey Results for: Sewta Regional Authority – Wales.
[11] At stop information is defined as a bus stop flag (incorporating service number(s), Traveline Cymru phone and text information) and a timetable display case.

arrangement. Funding for the operation of this could be obtained through top slicing the RTSG budget. This would ensure that all operators contributed to information and the funding contribution is equitable based on the number of km's operated.

3.3.10. The Traveline Cymru database is a unique asset that provides the foundation to expand provision; however in order to fulfil this potential it must be accurate and all partners have a role to play in providing timely and correct information. The use of the traveline Cymru database by all partners would also provide opportunities to minimise information costs.

3.3.11. Telephone and web enquires are best dealt with by Traveline Cymru but there needs to be a partnership approach and commitment to improving quality. Traveline Cymru, operators and Local Authorities must be able to offer up-to-date "live" travel information to aid confidence.

3.3.12. Ticket fare information is of primary importance to passengers; however with the exception of multi-trip tickets or zonal type fares, there is limited fare information available in advance. This is particularly important where an exact fare policy is in place. Significant progress has been made in the availability of this information; however universal coverage is not yet available. This will require fare information to be provided to Traveline Cymru by all operators.

3.3.13. The availability of bi-lingual and accessible information needs to be considered in the light of the relevant legislation.

BCT5 Sewta supports region-wide common passenger information standards, including for real-time information, and will work with relevant partners to develop an information strategy which identifies key requirements and service providers.

BCT6 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for the Traveline Cymru call centre, based on agreed service standards

BCT7 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide on board next stop information

BCT8 Through its capital programme, Sewta will provide funding to support information provision.

BCT9 Sewta will investigate opportunities to incentivise operators to assist with the production and/or installation of printed timetable information.

BCT10 Sewta will investigate opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to deliver region-wide bus stop information and maintenance through a central unit / shared services arrangement

Branding

3.3.14. Branding goes far beyond logos and design. A brand with strong brand values resonates throughout the entire product or organisation. A good brand can increase confidence amongst users. Perhaps the best transport brand anywhere in the world is Transport for London (TfL). No matter the location or mode, a similar feel, look and ethos is apparent. For integrated transport this is essential. However it should be noted that the TfL brand has been developed over 80 years and by an organisation that is largely able to control its network.

3.3.15. Within Sewta there are many brands - some complimentary, others conflicting. These include:

- Sewta.
- Local authorities.
- Bus companies.
- Community Transport operators.
- Train companies.
- Network Rail.
- National Rail Enquiries.
- Traveline Cymru.
- Bus Users UK.
- Welsh Government.
- GoCymru.
- TrawsCymru.
- Concessionary travel pass.
- Plusbus.
- Beacons Bus
- Specific Tickets e.g. Wales Flexipass, Network Rider.
- Individual route brands eg. baycar, just go, rail linc

3.3.16. Moving forwards, if the user is to feel part of a joined up system, Sewta must use the next rail franchise as the first stage to establishing a network identity that the various operating partners would be part of.

3.3.17. If a common brand including logo, typeface, writing style and customer service, were developed at stations, this could easily be adopted for bus stations and bus stops. With these two moves there would be instant recognition of coordination. As time progresses, more products can be added to the brand when they conform to a strict set of brand values. One option to consider is to adopt the West Midlands model where Centro is the business/leadership body, with the Network West Midlands brand as the public image.

3.3.18. The development of a common logo would also provide an opportunity to publicise funding support received to assist operation of the bus and community transport network. There is a recognition that consideration must be given to retaining the strengths of existing brands within an overarching branding strategy, given the existence of cross boarder services

BCT11 Sewta supports the establishment of a region-wide common public transport image (alongside operators' branding) and will work with relevant partners to develop a branding strategy

3.4. Bus Service Standards

3.4.1. The bus is the user's main point of contact with the bus network and impressions of the condition of the vehicle operated and the level of customer service received will inform the user's experience and determine whether further journeys are made or alternative modes of transport sought. Therefore this element is critical in influencing the propensity and ability to utilise the bus and community transport network. This section summarises the key elements that comprise the bus product.

Vehicle Standards

3.4.2. The quality of vehicle operated is a primary indicator of the level of service that can be expected. This is particularly important when attempting to attract new users or achieve

modal shift from the private car. Bus use is a more sustainable transport option, and developments in alternative fuel technology provide a further opportunity for the bus network to contribute to the climate change agenda.

3.4.3. There have been a number of fleet investment programmes in the region, which has raised the overall standard of vehicles. Whilst the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) have been one influence, this has not been the only driver.

3.4.4. The Act defines the legal vehicle standards required to enable access by people with reduced mobility. This includes the provision of low-floor buses or the fitment of ramps and hoists to minibuses) Implementation of the Act is phased according to class of vehicle[12]. These are:

- single deck vehicles weighing less than 7.5 tonnes, 1st January 2015;
- single deck vehicles weighing more than 7.5 tonnes, 1st January 2016;
- double deck buses, 1st January 2017; and
- single and double deck coaches, 1st January 2020.

3.4.5. Part 12 of the 2010 Equality Act makes reference to guidelines that newly built transport vehicles need to meet. All public service vehicles must be accessible by 1st January 2017. Sewta will aim to improve accessibility prior to this date by incentivising operators through the RTSG scheme.

3.4.6. There are areas within the region where some vehicles do not meet the aspirations of Sewta, although the final phase of DDA implementation may remove some of these from the fleet. However, some operators may not be in a position to renew their fleet or meet the cost of purchasing alternative fuel vehicles. Such operators may choose instead to invest in second hand DDA compliant vehicles. The challenge for Sewta is to stimulate investment by such operators without contravening competition or State Aid legislation.

3.4.7. Given the dominance of commercially provided services in the Sewta region there is a delicate balance between specifying vehicle standards that meet customers' expectations, but are not so onerous on operators that they cannot commercially meet that standard. This is particularly pertinent on marginal routes, where an increase in the vehicle cost could jeopardise the commercial viability of a service, which could lead to its withdrawal or require additional public support.

3.4.8. Vehicle standards on the supported local bus service network differ significantly across the Sewta region. A number of authorities consider vehicle standards such as average age of fleet or DDA compliance within the tender evaluation process, others specify a vehicle standard for a tendered route.

3.4.9. It is the aim of Sewta to provide a similar quality of vehicle on tendered services as can be found on the commercial services operating in the region. It is recognised that full refurbishment also has a role to play as Sewta encourages the provision of a minimum quality standard for all vehicles in receipt of Regional Transport Services Grant. These requirements are discussed in greater detail in section 4.

3.4.10. A fully accessible bus and community transport network is a critical element of delivering a fully inclusive society. Accessible bus stops as well as vehicles are a vital link in this vision, with supporting infrastructure measures contained in section 4.

BCT12 Through its capital programme, Sewta will provide funding for a Green Bus Fund.

[12] There are limited exemptions according to vehicle purpose and topography.

BCT13 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to improve vehicle standards.

Training requirements

3.4.11. In 2008, the Government transposed EU Directive 2003/59/EC, introducing the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) for lorry, bus and coach drivers. Since then all new bus drivers must gain a CPC as well as a PCV licence, through examination, before being able to drive in service.

3.4.12. CPC's are valid for a period of 5 years; renewed every 5 years through attendance at 35 hours of accredited training courses, carried out in the preceding 5 year period. Periodic training is designed to complement the individual driver's work and be relevant to their every day job. The syllabus broadly covers:

- Safe and fuel efficient driving.
- Legal requirements.
- Health and safety, service and logistics.
- Customer care.
- Disability awareness.

3.4.13. In addition to CPC training, to fulfil H&S requirements it is important that PCV drivers undertake adequate bus type training as well as route training, before driving a bus in service.

BCT14 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide relevant staff training.

Ticketing

3.4.14. Under the terms of the Competition Act, there are stringent regulations regarding the ability for operators to collaborate regarding fares and tickets. Whilst these are designed to prevent collusion and maintain market competition, it does create complexity regarding the availability of integrated tickets and an operator's ability or desire to accept a competitor's ticket.

3.4.15. Whilst there are some exemptions to these regulations, the complex legal situation and potential penalties have generally deterred large scale implementation in the de-regulated market. There are a range of products currently available including:

- Operator specific single and return tickets.
- Operator specific multi-ride tickets (e.g. daily or weekly tickets providing unlimited travel during a specified time period).
- Operator specific bus/rail tickets (e.g. First Bus and Rail).
- Plus Bus (combined bus and rail ticket).
- Multi-operator daily or weekly tickets (e.g. Network Rider and Beacons Bus network).

3.4.16. It should also be noted that there is variability regarding which schemes operators participate in. This situation creates uncertainty for users and can be a barrier to bus use. Accordingly Sewta is keen to investigate opportunities to provide and promote integrated tickets. This is also highlighted as a key recommendation of the South Wales Integrated Force and a central theme of the Metro proposals.

3.4.17. One of the principal remedies identified by the Competition Commission to address competition issues was measures to increase the number of multi operator ticket schemes, and to ensure these are effective and attractive to customers.

3.4.18. For these tickets to become more user-friendly and easier to market they need to be universally available on all local bus services within the Sewta region and at a consistent price. Common branding would also help with marketing and to increase customer awareness.

3.4.19. Within the Sewta area the Network Rider ticket is already issued and accepted by most providers of local bus services on a 'knock for knock' basis. In order to satisfy current competition regulations, revenue 'lands where it falls' i.e. each operator retains the fares collected, so no apportionment is required. This product is ideally placed to form the foundation for a multi-operator day ticket that is valid throughout the Sewta region.

3.4.20. The Weekly Network Rider is the weekly equivalent, but this is issued and accepted by a smaller number of operators, as the discrepancy between winners and losers is greater; therefore some form of revenue pooling or equitable apportionment would be required for their participation.

3.4.21. This would however require the development of a more complex scheme to ensure such a product conforms to Competition Commission requirements and checks would be required to ascertain whether such a product would need to be registered under the Public Transport Scheme Block Exemption as a Multi Operator Travelcard.

3.4.22. The Department for Transport has recently published guidance for local transport authorities on planning and implementing multi-operator ticketing services.[13] This may provide an opportunity to develop new products linked to future reimbursement rates of RTSG funding.

3.4.23. A steering group, comprising of Sewta and key stakeholders, may assist in the development of Network Rider products and ensure issues are resolved in a way that could provide bus passengers with the inter-availability of ticketing they desire. It is possible that participation might become a condition for RTSG eligibility.

3.4.24. If availability of the Weekly Network Rider continues to be different to the day ticket, an alternative brand name should be agreed to limit confusion.

3.4.25. A working group has been formed to oversee the roll out of the GoCymru electronic purse throughout Wales. At the moment, single and return tickets are seen as the core products that should be available using the GoCymru Card, but the inclusion of Network Rider or similar multi-journey ticket is also under discussion. This could benefit the customer by providing discounted fares for multiple journeys, but operator views also need to be taken into consideration along with any competition issues, particularly in relation to revenue allocation.

3.4.26. The key to the successful implementation of an integrated ticketing scheme is ensuring all participants receive equitable apportionment of scheme revenue. There is also a need to demonstrate any additional administrative costs are outweighed by increased revenue or funding support.

3.4.27. In addition there are a number of legal requirements that must be satisfied in order to introduce a universally accepted multi-operator ticketing scheme. These include approval from the Office of Fair Trading for a Block Exemption and licencing from the

[13] Building better bus services: multi-operator ticketing; DfT, March 2013: www.gov.uk/dft

Financial Services Authority (FSA). These have significant implications for scheme participants.

3.4.28. Sewta currently provides back office support to smaller operators in the administration of the All Wales Concessionary Fare Scheme. Whilst this provides a foundation to provide independent, centralised administration of a wider integrated ticket scheme, this would require significant additional resources, in particular monitoring and audit functions.

BCT15 Sewta supports a single integrated ticketing scheme for all public transport services in the region, and will work with relevant partners to develop a ticketing strategy.

BCT16 Sewta maintains participation in the GoCymru card working group.

BCT17 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to participate in and promote existing multi-operator and multi-modal tickets, such as Network Rider and PlusBus Tickets.

Bus fares

3.4.29. The availability of competitive bus fares is a key influence on the propensity to use the bus network. This was demonstrated by the increase in patronage following the introduction of the All Wales Concessionary Fares Scheme.

3.4.30. In addition to the physical reductions and withdrawals outlined in section 3.5.13, a report to the July 2012 meeting of the Sewta Board noted that the changes in funding had resulted in some operators increasing fares. This trend has continued with further fare increases with effect from 1st April 2013.

3.4.31. Although Sewta has no direct control regarding the level of fares, Sewta can assist operators maintain or reduce operating costs through improvements in network efficiency (for example bus priority measures) that can reduce peak vehicle requirements – enabling operators to reduce the number of vehicles or increase the frequency of services at a lower cost.

3.4.32. The bus network plays a vital role for young persons aged 16 and over, who do not have access to an alternative. The ability to attract young persons to utilise buses will contribute to their propensity to use in the future and may postpone their decision to purchase a car or reduce their use of a car. Sewta welcomes initiatives to attract this age group.

BCT18 Sewta supports the provision of affordable public transport and will work with relevant partners to achieve efficiency gains that will reduce operating costs, reducing pressure to increase fares.

BCT19 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding to bus operators to keep fares more affordable.

BCT20 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide reduced fares for young persons.

Safety and Security

3.4.33. Whilst safety and security are not the primary factors in selecting a mode of travel, they are frequently cited reasons for *not* selecting a particular mode. It is not only the actual level of safety and security that is important but also the perceived level. This is

illustrated by a loss of consumer confidence in a particular mode following an accident, despite its relative safety compared with alternative modes.

3.4.34. Safety and security measures constitute both capital and revenue expenditure. The implementation of capital safety measures primarily occurs as an integral consideration in the detailed design of schemes. For example interchange enhancements incorporate the following safety and security features:

- Improved lighting and glazed waiting areas to improve natural surveillance.
- CCTV.
- Provision of supervisory staff.
- Bus boarders to provide near level boarding/alighting making these manoeuvres safer, particularly for users with reduced mobility.
- Provision of crossing points with dropped kerbs on main desire lines.

3.4.35. Safety and security are important throughout the whole journey. Whilst this strategy is concerned with those factors that directly affect the bus network, it is important to establish liaison with other agencies, such as the police, Health & Safety Executive (HSE) etc. who will influence broader safety and security issues.

3.4.36. The presence of a uniformed official often provides passengers with additional reassurance. Whilst there is a revenue cost, this must be considered against the potential increase in use. The employment of Bus Station Rangers in Bridgend and Newport or the funding of dedicated PCSO's by Newport Bus has produced positive user responses.

3.4.37. The use of CCTV on vehicles and at key interchanges provides reassurance to passengers, and the potential to arrest and convict offenders.

3.4.38. The delivery of a secure travelling environment is a complex issue, with no single measure being an effective panacea to all problems. It is therefore important to adopt a range of measures.

BCT21 Sewta supports measures to improve safety and security and will work with relevant partners to ensure schemes implemented under its capital programme consider such measures and locations where there are issues are identified and addressed.

BCT22 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to fit CCTV to vehicles.

Customer feedback

3.4.39. Whilst all agencies endeavour to provide a level of service commensurate with customer expectation, there may be occasions where this is not achieved. The availability of a customer comment and complaints procedure provides an opportunity to address any incidents and identify potential measures that can minimise the risk of reoccurrence.

3.4.40. Such a procedure should be clearly advertised to passengers, primarily through on-board notices and supplemented by website and printed timetable information where available.

3.4.41. Bus Users UK in Wales provides representation for bus passengers who have been unable to resolve issues directly with an operator. This provides an avenue to raise concerns and provides potential mediation to resolve them. Bus Users UK also run a

series of Bus Surgeries (called Your Bus Matters) in conjunction with bus operators. This provides valuable feedback of any issues that are pertinent to the network.

BCT23 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will require operators to operate a customer complaints procedure.

BCT24 Sewta will maintain close liaison with Bus Users UK in Wales as a partner of the Sewta Board.

3.5. Network Accessibility

3.5.1. One of the key functions of the regional bus network is to facilitate access to key regional services and facilities. In its primary form, two elements should be considered:

- Geographic and topographical coverage.
- Operating hours.

3.5.2. The majority of bus services in the Sewta region are operated on a commercial basis accounting for approximately 80% of service mileage. These are provided by private bus companies[14], who are responsible for the planning of routes, frequency of services and fare levels. Where it is deemed that a bus service is required to facilitate access to socially necessary services, the local authorities may subsidise operation.

3.5.3. In addition, the Welsh Government provides funding for TrawsCymru network of long distance services that provide links to key destinations. This includes the provision of direct bus link between Cardiff Central Railway Station and Cardiff Wales Airport. Whilst the purpose of these is the provision of national links, they can also provide regional links. Therefore it is important that these services are properly funded and integrated in the network.

3.5.4. Sewta is currently collecting mileage information from operators through administration of the RTSG funding. The first returns are due on 31st July 2013 and will provide a definitive split between commercial and supported mileage. Such financial assistance is generally utilised for two main purposes:

- Extending the geographical reach of the network – for example the purchase of a discrete service or supporting the diversion/extension of an existing bus route.
- Extending the hours of operation – for example supporting services to operate during evenings or Sundays.

3.5.5. Whilst these measures increase the reach of the network, there are many residents for whom mainstream ‘stage carriage’ bus services are not suitable or service subsidy is not economically viable. This is generally due to two main factors:

- Geographical remoteness from the network.
- Reduced mobility and/or the requirement for assisted travel which prevents use of ordinary buses.

3.5.6. In order to address the needs of such users, there is a need to provide flexible transport solutions. These include community transport services as well as demand responsive local bus services. These services may be provided by the third sector and through local authority operated schemes. Although such services often require users to register and pre-book trips, their flexible routing provides users with a door-to-door

[14] Includes municipally owned bus companies operated at arms length.

service, which whilst journey times may be longer, offers a distinct advantage over fixed routes.

Geographical and topographical coverage

3.5.7. The Sewta region has an extensive network of bus services that provide a high level of geographical coverage. This is supported by the results of the Welsh Government report '*Monitoring the National Transport Plan Baseline Report 2012*.' This indicates the following key results:

Table 3.1 Accessibility Scores for Sewta Region[15]

Indicator	Percentage
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of NHS Major Acute Hospitals between 10am and 12pm on a Tuesday by public transport	90.9
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of: GP Surgeries between 10am and 12pm on a Tuesday by public transport	98.9
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of: Pharmacies between 10am and 12pm on a Tuesday by public transport	98.9
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of Primary Schools between 7am and 9am on a Tuesday by public transport	98.8
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of Secondary Schools between 7am and 9am on a Tuesday by public transport	98.1
The proportion of people aged 16 and over within 60 minute travel time threshold of Higher, Further and Adult Education providers between 7am and 9am on a Tuesday by public transport	98.1
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of a 'Key Centre' between 10am and 12pm on a Tuesday by public transport	97.4
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of a 'Key Centre' between 8am and 12pm on a Saturday by public transport	98.1
The proportion of people aged 16 and over within 60 minute travel time threshold of A 'Key Centre' between 7am and 9am on a Tuesday by public transport	97.3
The proportion of households within 60 minute travel time threshold of A 'Key Visitor Attraction' (as defined in Welsh Transport Statistics 2008 as those attractions receiving over 50,000 visitors annually) between 10am and 12pm on a Saturday by public transport	87.2

3.5.8. Since completion of this exercise, a number of service changes associated with the reduction in RTSG have been introduced from 1st April 2013 and the Welsh Government is planning to repeat this monitoring exercise, which will enable Sewta to compare the results and address changes as appropriate.

BCT25 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for member authorities to extend the coverage of the public transport network through additional contracted services.

[15] Monitoring the National Transport Plan, Baseline Report; 2012: Welsh Government

BCT26 Sewta will review the results of future accessibility exercises to determine the impact of service changes following revisions to funding arrangements.

Operating hours

3.5.9. Whilst daytime coverage is good, with many commercial services this reduces sharply in certain areas within the region during the evenings and on Sundays, with an increasing proportion of supported services being provided. This shortfall reduces social inclusion and limits access to employment and leisure opportunities, as well as to essential services such as hospitals. It also increases car dependency.

3.5.10. As times have changed, there is a specific need for the growth of the Sunday network to reflect Sunday trading and leisure activities, and the resultant increase in demand from shoppers and workers to access main shopping centres. In many of the urban retail centres, trading per hour is greater on a Sunday than at any other time of the week and parts of the region that are well served by core services Monday to Saturday are lacking similar Sunday services

3.5.11. The reduction of funding received by local authorities in 2013/14 increases the challenge to provide supported services with a smaller budget. During recent re-tendering processes, local authorities within the region have withdrawn some supported services and rationalised routes in order to deliver services within budgetary constraints.

BCT27 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide Sunday services through payment of a higher rate.

BCT28 Sewta will investigate opportunities to incentivise operators to provide Monday to Saturday evening services.

Stability

3.5.12. The ability to maintain a stable network of services is a vital way of providing users with the confidence to plan journeys. This will also influence decisions regarding their place of residence or employment.

3.5.13. In general the core daytime network has remained relatively stable. However there have been a number of changes in the last 12 months. The impact of these varies across each local authority, due to differences in geography and population densities, which impact on operating costs and levels of demand.

3.5.14. Many of these changes are directly attributable to the recent reduction in revenue funding, which has been a catalyst for service reviews, with associated disruption for affected passengers. The types of measures employed by the operators to reduce operating costs include:

- Reductions in daytime frequency.
- Withdrawal of evening or Sunday Services.
- Revised routes to reduce vehicle mileage.

3.5.15. These measures reduce the ability of the bus network to compete with other modes and reduce accessibility for those people without access to an alternative.

3.5.16. However, a number of authorities have also raised concerns that the full impact of the funding revisions have not been fully realised at this time, with some currently undertaking a review of supported services. The actual impact of the reduction in funding is unlikely to be fully realised until the third quarter of this financial year. A

concern is that many services are operating on the margins of viability, and further cuts in bus funding would put them in jeopardy.

3.5.17. In order to stabilise the network through the transitional year of 2013/14, Sewta has provided a one-off transitional relief payment to those bus operators where the changes in grant criteria funding have been greater than average as part of its RTSG spend It is anticipated the payment of this transitional relief will avoid any unintended consequences as a result of changing schemes, such as network revisions. Work is continuing to identify opportunities to minimise any further reductions in service provision.

BCT29 Sewta will investigate opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to incentivise operators to maintain stability of the regional public transport network.

Journey Time

3.5.18. The ability of the bus and community transport network[16] to compete with other modes is influenced by the overall journey time (including time penalties associated with interchange) and the reliability of the scheduled journey time.

3.5.19. Sewta and its industry partners are working to promote journey time and reliability improvements through initiatives like the Pontypridd to Cardiff Corridor Bus Priority Scheme, which is taking forward a series of bus priority measures designed to improve the flow of bus services through Pontypridd town centre and along the A470 corridor into Cardiff. This scheme will make journey times more attractive to users and non users alike, improving operational efficiency, which will increase use and reduce unit operating costs, leading to improved frequencies and even reduced fares.

3.5.20. Whilst one of the strengths of the bus network is its flexibility to serve a range of communities, it can extend point-to-point journey times compared to other modes such as rail or the private car. The provision of regional limited stop express services could provide increase bus connectivity between key centres. Currently the numbers of this type of service that are operating in the region are limited.

BCT30 Sewta will work with relevant partners to identify opportunities to provide limited stop express services as part of the TrawsCymru and Cardiff Capital Region Metro Proposals.

Service frequency

3.5.21. The ability to provide a high frequency of service[17] encourages a culture for passengers to 'turn up and go' reducing reliance on timetables. This type of service also provides a degree of mitigation for late running or cancelled services.

Route Development

3.5.22. Given the majority of services in the region are provided on a commercial basis, the development of new routes is primarily lead by the bus operators. However it is vital that all agencies work together to identify route opportunities that reflect changing travel patterns, such as the development of new residential areas or regional facilities.

BCT31 Sewta will work with relevant partners to ensure transport implications associated with regionally significant developments are fully considered and conditioned at the planning stage.

[16] Including Community Transport Schemes operated under a Section 22 Permit.
[17] Services with a frequency in excess of 6 buses per hour.

BCT32 Sewta will work with relevant partners to investigate opportunities to pump prime new routes through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

3.6. Integration with other elements of Sewta Regional Transport Network

Community Transport

3.6.1. It is often difficult to gauge the size of the transport deficit for disadvantaged groups, as the commonly used Accession™ modelling input data does not take account of the community transport provision or other demand responsive services. Whilst community transport is not bus stop based and in many cases not timetable related, it fulfils an important role.

3.6.2. Community transport is reliant on revenue support to maintain even a basic level of service, and there are often issues in sustaining community transport services in terms of funding support and development. Resources vary considerably, and there are inconsistencies in the levels of support provided and approach adopted by Local Authorities across the region. A move from one-year to three-year funding cycles would be of significant benefit in helping with future planning of community transport services, something referenced in the recent report from the Assembly's Business and Enterprise Committee.

3.6.3. The capacity and type of community transport services available varies throughout the region. For instance, there are:

- Few social car schemes providing bespoke individualised travel.
- Limited group transport services availability for community groups especially where the groups supply their own drivers.
- Different operational hours and capacity.
- Variations in standards and booking terms across the region.

3.6.4. While many of the issues facing community transport relate to revenue funding, there is also a need for further capital funding to expand service delivery and to ensure that the passenger experience is not compromised. Despite significant capital investment being provided by Sewta over the last 3 years, there are still issues with ageing fleets and the inability of many community transport schemes to invest in new vehicles to support service expansion.

3.6.5. Community transport needs to be seen as a part of the public transport mix, with better integration between community transport and conventional public transport provision, using flexible transport such as demand responsive section 22 services to offer a service more tailored to individual needs.

3.6.6. There is a wish to see community transport service providers continue to fulfil their valuable local and socially necessary role. However, there are barriers and significant costs associated with driver training and the equipment needed to promote integration, which need to be overcome.

3.6.7. There are obvious implications for the sector in terms of an ageing population, with the number of "oldest old" i.e. those aged over 80 set to increase significantly over the coming years, with resultant personalised transport needs. Whilst the Welsh Government's focus at this time of economic renewal is understandably on transport to employment and skills and improving integration, the need for socially necessary transport will become greater.

3.6.8. Sewta's policy (FTP1) on community transport as stated in the current Regional Transport Plan is to support "flexible transport services, including Demand Responsive Transport and Voluntary and Community Transport that complement and enhance the mainstream transport system." The associated action (FTA1) is to "develop flexible transport initiatives that complement and add to the mainstream transport system through an enhancement programme."

3.6.9. As pressure on resources increases, it will be necessary to work closely with those organisations that are primary influences on trip generation, including Local Health Boards and social services.

3.6.10. For the community transport sector to move forward significantly, bridge identified gaps and be able to integrate better with public transport networks, some of the areas that should be developed and supported in partnership with the Community Transport Association (CTA Wales) are listed below:

- Enhanced and shared software systems leading to common operating frameworks
- Common branding and promotion and development of collaborative working
- Equitable provision of services such as community car networks, s22 demand responsive services and others
- Development of additional tailored services such as Wheels to Work, Car Clubs and Travel Buddy schemes, based upon feasibility studies
- Training to support areas such as governance, business and strategic planning, record keeping and management information

BCT33 Sewta supports Community Transport and other flexible transport services to complement and enhance the mainstream public transport network, and will work with the Community Transport Association Cymru to support CT operators.

BCT34 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for Community Transport operators

BCT35 Through its capital programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for a Community Transport Enhancement Programme.

BCT36 Sewta will investigate further opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to develop supporting functions of the CT network, including Information Technology, service development and promotion, training and service feasibility.

Interchanges

3.6.11. Interchanges provide a central focus and point of integration for public transport services. The quality and safety of the facilities provided at interchanges is a key influence on passenger perception of public transport services and encompasses, for example the quality of the passenger-waiting environment and the travel information provided. The provision of high quality public transport interchange facilities often has important regeneration benefits as a catalyst to stimulate investment due to the associated footfall.

3.6.12. The scale of interchanges and facilities available varies across the region, ranging from dedicated facilities (such as Cardiff or Newport bus stations) to on-street facilities (such as Pontypool town centre or Tredegar). These reflect local requirements, such as the number of services and key functions. Sewta has delivered a major programme of interchange enhancement schemes, including:

- Bargoed.
- Blackwood.
- Bridgend.
- Pontypridd.
- Porth.
- Tredegar.

3.6.13. The Sewta RTP and associated capital works programme includes a number of future projects to enhance remaining principal interchanges:

- Abergavenny.
- Brynmawr.
- Cardiff Central Bus Station.
- Chepstow.
- Newport Bus Station.
- Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station.
- Severn Tunnel Junction

3.6.14. As part of interchange enhancements, opportunities to attract and facilitate arrival by waking and cycling will also be considered to assist deliver the aims of the Active Travel Bill. The provision of secure cycle parking is critical to give users the confidence to leave their cycle unattended whilst making their connecting bus journeys.

3.6.15. In addition to capital improvement schemes, it is imperative that each facility is maintained to a high standard to increase user perception.

BCT37 Sewta supports further improvements to and expansion of public transport interchanges, and will work with relevant partners to develop measures to improve interchange at all key settlements and other appropriate locations.

BCT38 Through its capital programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for a programme of interchange improvements

BCT39 Sewta will investigate opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to ensure consistent maintenance and operations of interchanges across the region.

Integration between bus and rail services

3.6.16. Buses have a key role in the transport network, providing many short, medium and long distance journeys in a flexible way that the rail network could never replicate. Accordingly, the bus network in Wales carries approximately four times more passengers than the Welsh rail network.[18] As the two key elements of the public transport network, bus and rail services have distinctive attributes, which often segment the passenger market. On some routes, both modes compete for market share with alternative product offers, whilst in some areas, integration between modes is effective and offers the best solution for passengers. The key is to understand where integration is likely to work.

3.6.17. Integrating transport networks is not as easy as it sounds. If bus and the train service frequencies are low, the potential for integration will be limited. If the buses and trains run frequently, then integration takes place almost naturally – providing there is a convenient and sensible interchange point that facilitates easy transfer between modes.

[18] http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/transport/?lang=en

3.6.18. The focus of bus / rail integration should be on what passengers want, on what purpose a particular route serves and whether there is potential to benefit the public transport network and offer alternatives to car based journeys. High frequency services, good interchange facilities, information and good value fares, together with a clear understanding of the market served are the key ingredients Sewta is working to bring together.

3.6.19. Caerphilly is an example of natural interchange. The bus and train stations are co-located and the town is served by a frequent network of local bus routes and a 15 minute train service that runs from Bargoed to Cardiff / Penarth. Stagecoach, which provides most of the local bus routes, offers a through bus / rail ticket, as well as competitive weekly rider tickets, whilst Arriva Trains similarly offer a range of good value season tickets. The ability to offer wider through ticketing opportunities is also a key factor in attracting and facilitating multi-modal journeys.

3.6.20. Modal interchange in Caerphilly is significant, yet there are also 4 buses per hour into Cardiff. For many passengers, rail provides the capacity speed and consistent journey times that they expect when travelling to work in Cardiff every day, but also provide a peak capacity that buses would struggle to match. For others, the bus provides a more direct service to employment or facilities that the train cannot serve, or a more cost effective journey or preferable environment.

3.6.21. To promote integration at times when bus and frequencies are lower (e.g. evenings and Sundays), Sewta will work with its constituent councils to revise timetables on supported bus services to connect with trains where this is achievable.

3.6.22. Dedicated bus / rail links feed into the rail network directly to provide an almost seamless journey for passengers. These are cheap and effective extensions to the rail network that offer passengers through tickets and the flexibility to maintain connections for late running trains and provide a reliable link for communities remote from the rail network.

3.6.23. Through appropriate branding and marketing and adoption as an integral part of the rail network, they can offer an attractive public transport choice, particularly in areas where existing bus and / or train frequencies are not high enough to achieve ‘natural’ integration. Unfortunately they require a commitment to on going revenue funding and in the current financial climate; this has resulted in the withdrawal of the majority of these services; therefore it is recommended such services become a requirement of the next round of rail franchises.

BCT40 Sewta will investigate opportunities to include dedicated rail feeder services as an integral requirement of the next round of rail franchising.

Park and Ride services

3.6.24. The Sewta Regional Transport Plan has identified a programme of bus based park and ride and park and share schemes that are aimed at encouraging a modal shift away from single occupancy car travel. The purpose of these facilities will be to remove traffic from the existing road network and relieve existing congestion.

3.6.25. The development of interchanges which provide facilities for park and ride and park and share is supported by the Welsh Government’s National Transport Plan, and the Sewta Regional Transport Plan.

3.6.26. There are currently three Park and Ride facilities located in the South, East and West of Cardiff that are well placed to attract users and prevent them using car for the whole journey:

- Cardiff West - Cardiff City Stadium, Leckwith (Monday to Friday, max 1000 spaces).
- Cardiff South - County Hall, Atlantic Wharf (Saturday only operation max 550 spaces).
- Cardiff East - Pentwyn Interchange, M48 / Junction 30 (Daily 950 spaces).

3.6.27. There is significant potential to intercept traffic north of Cardiff by providing Park and Ride / Park and Share facilities on the A470 corridor. A number of potential locations are being considered for the provision of additional Park and Ride sites. Within Cardiff the Deposit LDP Strategic Site 2 (North of Junction 33). Other schemes in Newport and the Vale of Glamorgan also have the potential to reduce the volume of traffic travelling into city centres.

3.6.28. Bus based park and ride sites need to be large and attractive enough to encourage a significant shift from traffic on the target corridors. Therefore, parking for a minimum of 500 cars with bus priority/BRT measures along the line of route will be required for any sites being considered.

3.6.29. The provision of additional Park and Ride facilities is an integral part of emerging Sewta Metro Plus proposals for South East Wales.

BCT41 Sewta will investigate opportunities to provide bus based park and ride facilities, fully integrated with the main public transport network

Education transport

3.6.30. Under the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 each Local Education Authority (LEA) has a legal obligation to provide free transport to/from school for pupils who live beyond defined distances. At present these are:

- Primary (reception to Year 6) – 2 miles.
- Secondary (Year 7 to Year 11) – 3 miles.

3.6.31. Some LEA's operate a more generous provision, of 1½ miles for primary and 2 miles for secondary pupils. In addition, some provide transport assistance to students over the statutory school age.

3.6.32. Schools transport obligations are satisfied by a combination of two main methods, with the preferred option being identified on a case-by-case basis.

- Contract Provision – Utilises dedicated taxis or buses under contract to the LEA (A sub division of contract provision includes special needs pupils who require specialist transport).
- Local Bus Services – Pupils utilise the local network via the issue of passes.

3.6.33. In general, all primary school obligations are met by contracted services, in order to maximise the safety of the children. The Welsh Government has published guidance for Home to School Transport provision.

3.6.34. Analysis of school transport provision has identified the possibility of increased integration with community transport and socially necessary transport (for example rural provision), which will improve resource utilisation and create new opportunities for social inclusion. Although the staggering of school hours may offer a theoretical opportunity to enhance resource utilisation, there are practical limitations, particularly where siblings or pupils from a common locality have different start and finish time and would therefore require a second trip.

3.6.35. The preferred option is to utilise local bus services wherever possible, as this supports the wider transport network and usually provides a degree of flexibility to accommodate pre/after school activities.

3.6.36. In view of the complexity of creating a regional solution, the draft strategy advocates the creation of a regional working party comprising; bus operators, LEA's, and local authorities. The remit of this group will be to develop a preferred schools transport strategy and to ensure that links with community transport needs are fully explored. This process will form a platform for co-operation in developing a solution that encourages maximum integration in resources planning and allocation.

BCT42 Sewta will work with relevant partners to identify opportunities to integrate education and social services transport resources with the general bus and community transport network.

Patient Transport

3.6.37. Access to health is a complex area. Many patients who are not eligible for patient transport travel to primary or secondary health care appointments via the local bus or community transport networks.

3.6.38. Statutory "blue light" emergency and non-emergency patient transport (NEPT) delivered by the Wales Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) and other cross-sector organisations. However, changes arising as a result of the Griffiths Review of NEPT in 2010 and the more recent McLelland Review identified the potential for better integration with local authority and third sector transport, and in early July, the Health Minister announced an intention to separate elements of NEPT from the emergency response side of ambulance delivery

3.6.39. Non-emergency patient transport provides a vital service for thousands of patients across Wales. Around 1.4 million journeys are undertaken every year, enabling patients to access outpatient, day treatment and other services at NHS hospitals. Users of the service often require regular transport and many are vulnerable, with some physical or other disabilities, and are dependent on bespoke door to door transport.

3.6.40. Key issues in terms of improving NEPT delivery include improved cross-sector partnership working; better management information and control; more streamlined processes for admissions and discharges; more efficient use of resources and improved procurement and leasing arrangements. Pilot projects have been undertaken across Wales, of which three are in the Sewta region centred in the Cardiff and the Vale and Cwm Taf Health Boards and the Velindre NHS Trust. The results of these will be analysed once available.

3.6.41. The reconfiguration of health services across Wales is also likely to lead to transport challenges, although the full implications will not be clear until the new structures have been finalised. Transport to Health groups have been set by Welsh Government in three areas, one of which is in the SEWTA region, to look at the public transport implications stemming from actual and proposed changes to secondary healthcare services and to develop measures to mitigate any adverse impacts identified. This includes action by the LHBs to mitigate the impacts of service changes or by the Regional Transport Consortia and local authorities to improve access by public transport. There is a risk that such changes will require additional funding. Given the current RTSG budget constraints it should not be seen as the panacea to provide additional patient transport services.

BCT43 Sewta will work with the five local health boards and other relevant partners in the Sewta region to enable appropriate levels of access for patients, staff and visitors.

Tourism Transport

3.6.42. Sewta and Capital Region Tourism commissioned a joint report 'Sustainable Transport within Tourism' July 2012[19] that examined key issues related to the ability of visitors to utilise more sustainable modes, including buses to access the regions attractions and accommodation. This highlighted a number of issues, some of which were location specific, whilst others were generic to all bus users.

3.6.43. The region also hosts a number of major events, some of which have an impact on the capacity and reliability of the bus network. Where possible event organisers should work with transport providers to ensure adequate measures are taken to minimise the effect on the bus network.

BCT44 Sewta will work with relevant partners (including operators, Capital Region Tourism Brecon Beacons National Park and visitor attractions) to identify opportunities for the public transport network to contribute to the sustainable tourism agenda.

3.7. Bus Infrastructure

3.7.1. Providing accessible, well maintained infrastructure is key to delivering a fully accessible bus service. Sewta has 17 bus stations and over 8,450 bus stops within its region. Sewta requires new bus stop / bus station facilities funded through the RTP to be designed taking account of the following guidance and best practice:

- Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) Revised Guidelines, Reducing Mobility Handicaps Towards a Barrier Free Environment.
- Inclusive Mobility -A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure" (2002).
- Transport for London - Accessible Bus Stop Guidance.
- BSI Design of buildings and their approaches to meet needs of disabled people - Code of Practice.
- Bus Users UK - Public Transport for People with Sensory Loss.
- Branding and marketing opportunities.

BCT45 Sewta will ensure infrastructure schemes are designed in accordance with the relevant standards and in consultation with access groups.

BCT46 Through its capital programme Sewta will implement a series of Bus Stop Improvement programmes.

19 http://www.sewta.gov.uk/uploads/documents/107/original/Sustainable_Transport_within_Tourism_-_July_2012.pdf?1349968257

Compatibility of technical standards/consistent bus stop provision

3.7.2. Bus stop design and location is recognised as a crucial element in the drive to improve the quality of bus services. Sewta has developed standards for bus stop design, which take account of location, pedestrian accessibility, boarding point, bus stop infrastructure, Traffic Regulation Orders, drainage and cleansing. Sewta expects new bus stop facilities funded through the RTP to be designed following these standards.

3.7.3. It has become apparent that as capital work on key strategic bus corridors progress, roadside technology in the form of bus priority detection at traffic signals, Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) etc. all exist in varying forms across the wider Sewta network following progressive upgrading.

3.7.4. Sewta is due to commission a research study to consider these issues and identify the baseline position from which a gap analysis will be undertaken. The output of this work will be considered in the development of future infrastructure programmes.

BCT47 Sewta will work with relevant partners to develop common standards for roadside infrastructure and associated bus mounted technology.

Maintenance of bus roadside infrastructure

3.7.5. Clean, safe, well maintained bus stop facilities are an important element in encouraging passenger growth. It is for individual local authorities to maintain and cleanse bus stop facilities within the region. Standards of cleansing and maintenance vary significantly across the region depending on available funding, advertising concessions and in-house maintenance provision.

3.7.6. This position needs to be improved and the existing funding administered on a regional basis to develop a common standard of delivery across the region. There is further potential to add to this maintenance and cleansing fund through advertising / sponsorship.

BCT48 Sewta will investigate opportunities to attract investment in road side infrastructure through advertising.

Environmental issues

3.7.7. The bus network offers the opportunity to utilise a more sustainable mode of travel and contribute to the Welsh Government's climate change and air quality agenda. This will be achieved through the introduction of increasingly stringent vehicle emission standards.

3.7.8. Within the Sewta region, many operators have implemented fleet renewal programmes, which have reduced bus and community transport related emissions. It should however be noted that the fuel consumption figure for such vehicles is usually higher than older vehicles. This is due to the higher engine operating temperature.

3.7.9. There have also been a number of developments regarding alternative sources of propulsion, including bio-fuels, hydrogen, hybrid and electricity. Whilst these offer lower or zero emission at the point of operation, there is a large cost premium over conventional propulsion systems. This includes the actual vehicles themselves and the supporting infrastructure. This reduces the business case for switching to such systems.

3.7.10. A number of systems to monitor driver performance and safety management for fleets are available. These systems give feedback to both driver and management of the drivers' performance in respect of safe driving, identifying incidents of harsh

acceleration and braking, cornering, directional change and speeding. Through continuous monitoring, managers and drivers can use the safety score to review trips and determine specific habits or skills that need attention. Over time driving performance can improve, thus providing customers with improved levels of comfort during their journey and reduced risk of accidents. Additionally by reducing incidents of harsh braking and acceleration, fuel consumption will reduce, leading to environmental benefits.

3.7.11. Some operators have also invested in initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of depot related activities, including use of 'grey-water' recycling and low energy lighting.

BCT49 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to utilise more environmentally friendly vehicles and driving styles.

Interfaces with adjoining regions

3.7.12. Sewta is the regional transport body that is delivering the Welsh Government's bus funding programme for South East Wales, and is charged with the development of this strategy. This will show how RTSG will be used from 2014/15 to provide an equitable level of service provision and connectivity across the regions / inter-regionally. The emphasis will therefore change. Welsh Government funding will no longer be used simply to extend local service provision, though the constituent local authorities will remain free to use their own funding to enhance the regional base and provide a more locally focussed perspective.

3.7.13. Where services are not provided commercially, Sewta RTSG funding will be used to maximise the provision of public transport connections between two or more of the region's key settlements. In the cities and urban areas, priority will be given to ensuring that there is connectivity along strategic corridors linking into the main business, retail and healthcare centres.

BCT50 Sewta will maintain regular liaison with adjoining regions and counties to identify potential requirements and issues related to cross border bus services

3.8. Competition

3.8.1. With sustainable transport high on the current agenda, more emphasis is needed on maintaining an equitable means of reimbursing operators for providing the free travel concession, and on maximising fuel efficiency by minimising the congestion faced by buses and their passengers, thereby speeding up journeys and encouraging wider use. It is these factors that drive fare and service levels.

3.8.2. When the Office of Fair Trading launched its study into the supply of local bus services in 2009, there was concern amongst many stakeholders that it was at odds with the newly introduced Local Transport Act 2008 which focussed more on co-ordination than competition. There are examples throughout south east Wales of such competition between bus operators of all sizes but above all the biggest competitor to the bus is the private car.

3.8.3. The opportunities to provide a comprehensive, coordinated public transport network, which benefits the travelling public, can only be achieved through co-operation amongst operators. Uncoordinated competition is counter productive for a public service, and local evidence has shown that it brings instability to the network, with the result that the public lose many of the ticketing and through journey benefits that they previously enjoyed.

3.8.4. For much of the period between deregulation in 1986 and the late 1990's, operations within South East Wales were typified by bus wars. On the road competition was wasteful and low in quality. This did nothing to encourage the casual "turn up and go" user that many services in our region are now attracting. For the first time since the 1950's, bus operators within the region have begun to record non-concessionary organic passenger growth as operations have become more stable, having reaped the benefit of co-ordinated competition.

3.8.5. Competition for tenders within Sewta is reasonable, with three or more bids per contract being the norm. Co-operation rather than competition provides the most passenger benefit. An over competitive market for bus services is characterised by poor quality and under investment. Sewta is working with the operators in a more ordered competitive environment to further grow patronage.

3.8.6. Although the main corridors have a high level of service (frequency and vehicle quality) there is a risk that an over-competitive market for bus services will result in poor quality and under investment. For example unnecessary competition on core corridors may not provide significant additional benefits to the travelling public, whilst resources on marginal routes may be sacrificed.

3.8.7. The challenge for Sewta therefore is to encourage investment across the network to provide a service levels commensurate with our aspirations whilst working within the current legislative framework and predominantly commercial environment.

3.8.8. There have been a number of successful voluntary partnerships within the region, which have delivered tangible benefits, including the provision of at stop information, service enhancements and fleet renewals. It is therefore the preference to continue with such arrangements; however it is noted that Sewta retains the option to pursue Statutory Partnerships if necessary.

BCT51 Sewta will investigate opportunities to encourage network development in a way that maximises benefits for all.

BCT52 Sewta will continue to work with operators to expand voluntary partnerships and will investigate opportunities for statutory quality partnerships and quality contracts where it feels these may be necessary to improve the quality of services and network development.

Contracting arrangement

3.8.9. Where a service is contracted, the contract duration must not exceed ten years for bus and coach services[20], though this period may be extended by up to 50 % under certain conditions. Contracts must be awarded by means of transparent and non-discriminatory competitive procedures which may be subject to negotiation, though the obligation to instigate competitive procedures does not apply to low level contracts, the average annual value of which is estimated at less than EUR 1,000,000 or which supply less than 300,000 kilometres of public passenger transport services.

3.8.10. Such de minimis provisions give local authorities the flexibility to overcome gaps in the network which are very difficult to fill sensibly by tendering, such as the diversion of some or all of a commercial service via a village just off the main road or a route extension.

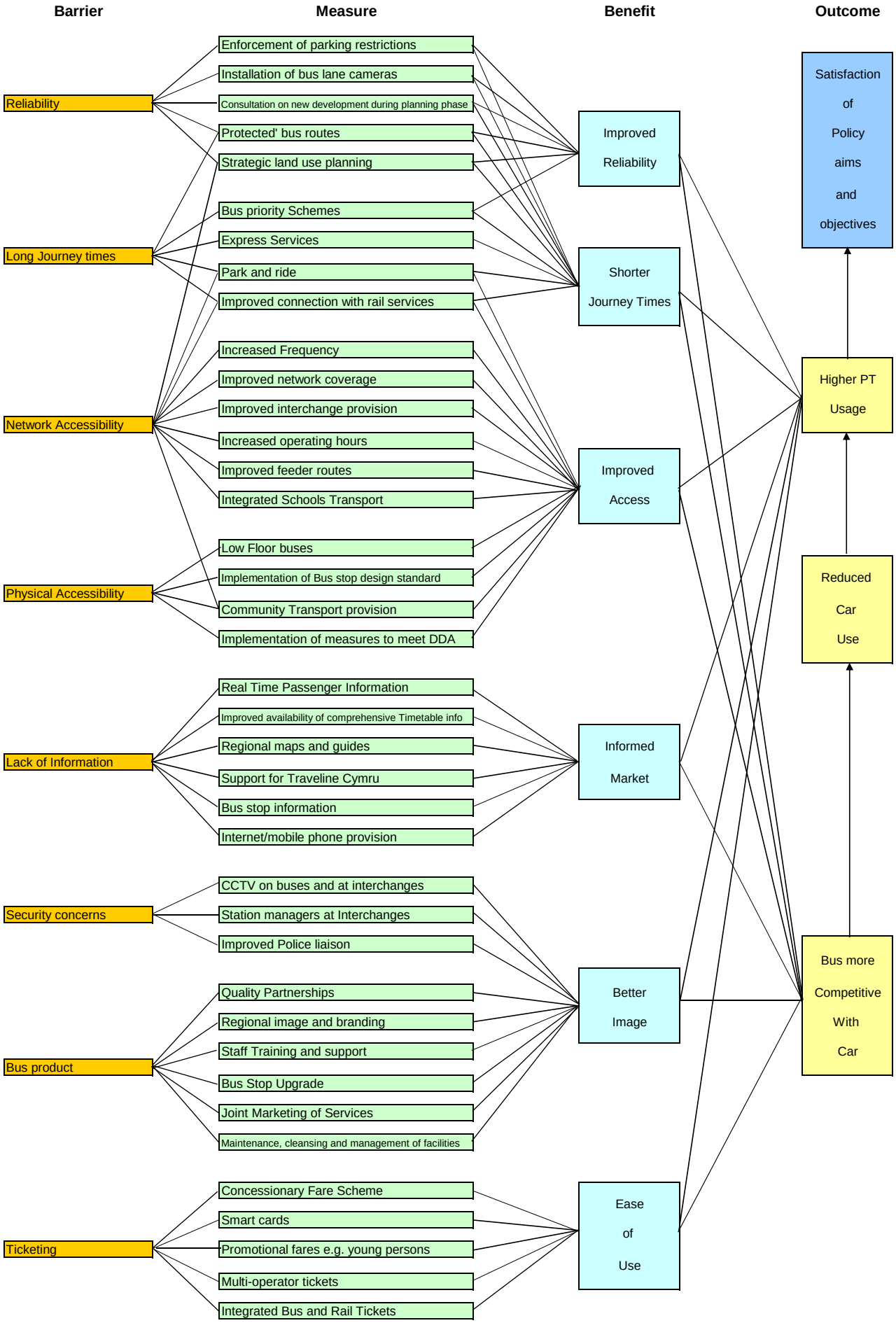
[20] EU Directive EC 1370/2007

BCT53 Sewta will work with the member authorities and operators to identify the most appropriate contracting arrangements and move towards standard terms and conditions of contract.

3.9. Strategy Summary of Measures

3.9.1. It is evident that no single measure will address all the issues raised during the development of this consultation document. Accordingly a package of measures and actions will be required to provide a network that meets the aspirations of all stakeholders. Figure 3.1 provides an illustration of the coordination of proposed measures to deliver desired outcomes.

Figure 3.1 - Barriers, Measures, Benefits and Effects



4. Funding, Prioritisation and scenarios

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. The primary objective of the bus service deregulation following the 1985 and 2000 Transport Acts was the introduction of competition to stimulate the market and reduce public expenditure; therefore fare box revenue was perceived as the primary source of funding for service operation and investment.

4.1.2. Whilst this is the case for the majority of services in the Sewta region, there are number of routes which are not commercially viable, but fulfil a vital public service role in facilitating access to employment, education and other socially necessary services.

4.1.3. Accordingly the Acts include provision for the public sector to provide financial subsidies to support such services. In addition successive Governments have recognised the contribution of public transport in fulfilling wider policy objectives, including greenhouse gas emissions. Accordingly funding has been provided to assist operators to keep fares at a lower level than they would otherwise be.

4.1.4. In common with other front line services, there has been a reduction in the level of funding available to support bus services, with a greater emphasis on providing funding linked to outcomes.

4.1.5. This section outlines the various sources of funding that contribute to the provision of bus services and the challenges faced by Sewta in mitigating the effects of revisions to funding arrangements.

4.2. Funding Background

Fare box revenue

4.2.1. Fare box income (i.e. passenger fares) remains the primary source of for Bus operators accounting for just over half of bus operator income[21]. The level of fares charged is determined by each individual operator. Under the current legislation, Sewta has no direct control over the actual level of fares on commercially provided services, although one of the purposes of the Bus Services Operating Grant and replacement RTSG scheme is to keep fares lower than they would otherwise be.

Regional Transport Services Grant (RTSG)

4.2.2. The Regional Transport Services Grant scheme provides support to bus and community transport operators to assist with the provision of regional bus services.

4.2.3. The overarching purpose of the grant is to assist achievement of the Welsh Government's key, strategic objectives, as set out in publications including "Programme for Government", the "Wales Transport Strategy", the prioritised "National Transport Plan", and the "Tackling Poverty Action Plan". These include:

- Enabling safe, reliable and sustainable travel.
- Improving public services.
- Reducing poverty.

21 http://www.applrguk.co.uk/files/lr%20uk%20overview%20of%20bus%20industry%20performance.%20alan%20howes%20associates.pdf

- Sustaining safe and vibrant communities.

4.2.4. To this end, a large proportion of RTSG is utilised to provide financial support on an agreed rate per kilometre for public bus services (excluding coach services) operating in the region. In order to incentivise operators to provide a high quality service, the actual reimbursement rate is determined by the achievement of defined service standards (refer section 5.2 for full details). The support also enables fares to be lower than they would otherwise be.

4.2.5. The Regional Transport Services Grant scheme also provides support to local authorities for contracted services (see section 4.4 below), to the Community Transport sector and to Traveline Cymru to support the operation of the call centre.

Local Authority Subsidy

4.2.6. There are a number of bus services that are not commercially viable, but fulfil a vital role in providing local access to socially necessary services; therefore under the terms of the Transport Acts (1985 and 2000) Local Authorities retain the option to provide financial support to such services as a top up to the regional network.

4.2.7. The level of support provided is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with some services fully subsidised, whilst others may only require a partial subsidy (for example geographical extension to serve more remote communities or additional operating hours to support commuting). This approach ensures the most efficient use of available funding and resources.

4.2.8. In addition to direct contract support, some local authorities provide eligible pupils with travel passes for use on general service buses to meet their home-to-school travel obligations. This can provide a more cost effective solution than the use of bespoke home-to-school services and increases patronage on local services.

Regional Transport Consortia Grant (RTCG)

4.2.9. In recent years the primary source of capital funding is the Regional Transport Services Grant. This is a block grant allocation from Welsh Government to the Regional Transport Consortia for the purposes of implementing the Regional Transport Plan.

4.2.10. The RTCG is utilised to implement a number of bus network infrastructure schemes, including Bus Priority measures, bus stop improvements and interchange schemes. The grant is determined on an annual basis, with an associated Business Plan, which sets out the implementation programme for the relevant financial year.

4.2.11. In autumn 2013 the Welsh Government has announced the first phase of the Metro proposal. These envisage substantial capital investment in the region's transport system, including investment in the bus system.

Welsh Government Supported Bus Services

4.2.12. The Welsh Government provides additional revenue funding for bus services, such as the T4 and T9 Traws Cymru services and previously funding for a now discontinued bus link between Rogerstone Station and Newport. The purpose of these services is to support strategic transport links.

4.2.13. To develop a true regional Bus Network Strategy for south east Wales, it will be necessary to work more closely with the Welsh Government to ensure any future service developments are fully aligned with the Strategy and meet the regional priorities and outcomes identified.

Other Supported Bus Services

4.2.14. In addition to Welsh Government and Local Authority Support, there are number of other bus services operating in the region that receive funding from other bodies. These include:

- Shopper Buses, serving large supermarkets
- Health Board services, e.g. Mountain Ash Railway Station to Ysbyty Cwm Cynon provided by Cwm Taf LHB
- Works buses, for example provided by large employers to accommodate shift work patterns

4.2.15. These services are planned and funded by external bodies as an addition to the regional network; therefore Sewta has no direct influence on their operation.

Concessionary Fares

4.2.16. In April 2002 the Welsh Government introduced the All Wales Concessionary Fare Scheme. This provides free travel for eligible persons (disabled persons and / or aged over 60 years of age[22]). There are no restrictions on the hours of operation (unlike England, which excludes travel before 9:30 am).

4.2.17. The total budget for Wales during 2013/14 was £71million. Discussions are continuing to determine the budget allocation for 2014/15.

Operator Investment

4.2.18. Under current legislative arrangements, bus operators are responsible for providing the service elements of the network (vehicles, drivers, inspectors, etc). There has been significant investment in the fleet, with 7 operators who responded to Sewta enquiries confirming over £25 million has been invested during the last three years on the purchase and upgrade of vehicles.

4.2.19. In addition to vehicle upgrade programmes, operator investment has also included depot improvements (such as fitment of rainwater harvesting and low energy lighting to reduce the environmental footprint) depot expansion and staff training. Whilst some of these measures are not directly visible to the travelling public, they provide valuable improvements in operating efficiency.

Developer Contributions

4.2.20. In addition to direct local authority support through the subsidy of bus services, there are a number of other potential sources of funding to improve transport infrastructure through developer contributions. There include

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – empowers local authorities to levy a charge on new developments to utilise in the provision supporting infrastructure.
- Section 38 Highways Act 1980 – provides powers for a local authority to adopt a highway built by a third party.
- Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – provides agreements for developers to provide funding for a specific site to fund highway or public transport improvements (for example pump prime bus services or provide bus stop infrastructure). Although some of the functions of S106 agreements will be carried out under the CIL, it is not a direct replacement for it.

[22] Initially eligibility for men was 65 years of age, which was equalised with female entitlement of 60 years of age on 1st April 2003

- Section 278 Highways Act 1980 – enables developer funded highway improvements to mitigate the effects of traffic generated by a specific development.

4.2.21. Whilst these contributions provide valuable sources of funding, they are dependent on the development market. The level of funding achievable by constituent authorities will also vary depending on their location. Although the CIL provides authorities with the opportunity to fund measures that will benefit the wider community, the remaining types are site specific. As a result of these factors, developer contributions are likely to provide a top-up to the main programme of measures to deliver location specific elements of the strategy.

4.3. Priorities

4.3.1. In common with other frontline services, there has been a reduction in the level of government funding, with a corresponding reduction in bus and community transport related budgets. Whilst Sewta is working in partnership to minimise the impact of such funding revisions, it is inevitable that the current level of provision will change.

4.3.2. Accordingly Sewta has prioritised the strategy actions to reflect their importance to the bus network and the potential timescale for implementation. The results of this exercise are contained in table 4.1.

4.3.3. Strategy Actions are further defined into 3 categories to reflect potential funding requirements:

- Capital Elements
- Revenue Elements
- No direct funding required (note outcomes may require future funding support, but cannot be determined at present)

4.3.4. This approach enables Sewta to develop an annual implementation plan that reflects funding availability.

4.4. Scenarios

4.4.1. The Welsh Government receives its block allocation on an annual basis; which makes it difficult to identify the level of funding available beyond the next financial year. Although this restricts the ability to develop a long-term implementation programme, the Sewta Bus and Community Transport Strategy implementation is based on three potential funding scenarios:

- Preferred Strategy – Full implementation of the strategy if appropriate funds become available
- Best alternative – Implementation of strategy measures to address key priorities
- Do Minimum – implementation of strategy measures assuming the current funding trend is maintained

4.4.2. These follow those of the Sewta Regional Transport Plan, which is due to be refreshed in 2015. The assumptions for each scenario are:

Preferred Strategy

4.4.3. Whilst previous investment in the bus network has improved provision overall, the metro proposals identify the need to create a step-change in the perception and provision of public transport in order to increase patronage. This will however, require

increased levels of investment (from both the public and private sectors) to meet Sewta's aspirations and achieve common objectives.

4.4.4. This scenario assumes such an increase in funding could be achieved, through a range of measures, including prudential borrowing powers for the Welsh Government, or future Barnett Consequential.

Best Alternative

4.4.5. It is appreciated that in view of current budgetary demands and the current annual funding settlement from the UK Government, it is unlikely that the level of funding required to implement the strategy in full will be available.

4.4.6. The strategy therefore considers the 'Best Alternative' which focuses on the priorities identified through the development and consultation process.

Do Minimum

4.4.7. This scenario assumes that the trend of reducing public funding for the bus and community transport network continues.

4.4.8. It should be noted under all scenarios, that the final settlements for each budget are under consideration by Welsh Government; therefore Sewta will develop an annual implementation plan that reflects the level of funding awarded.

Table 4.1 - Strategy Priorities and Actions

Priority score	BCT - Action	Importance	Timescale	Type
1	BCT2 Through its capital programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for bus priority measures, including bus lanes, bus gates and junction priority measures	1	1	c
1	BCT13 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to improve vehicle standards.	1	1	r
1	BCT14 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide relevant staff training.	1	1	r
1	BCT17 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to participate in and promote existing multi-operator and multi-modal tickets, such as Network Rider and PlusBus Tickets.	1	1	r
1	BCT18 Sewta supports the provision of affordable public transport and will work with relevant partners to achieve efficiency gains that will reduce operating costs, reducing pressure to increase fares.	1	1	r
1	BCT19 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding to bus operators to keep fares more affordable.	1	1	r
1	BCT22 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to fit CCTV to vehicles.	1	1	r
1	BCT23 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will require operators to operate a customer complaints procedure.	1	1	r
1	BCT25 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for member authorities to extend the coverage of the public transport network through additional contracted services.	1	1	r
1	BCT34 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for Community Transport operators	1	1	r
1	BCT49 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to utilise more environmentally friendly vehicles and driving styles.	1	1	r
1	BCT1 Sewta supports further bus priority, and will work with member authorities, operators, bus user representatives, the Traffic Commissioner, parking enforcement authorities and Welsh Government to develop measures to reduce bus journey times and improve reliability and punctuality.	1	1	p
1	BCT9 Sewta will investigate opportunities to incentivise operators to assist with the production and/or installation of printed timetable information.	1	1	p
1	BCT31 Sewta will work with relevant partners to ensure transport implications associated with regionally significant developments are fully considered and conditioned at the planning stage.	1	1	p
1	BCT32 Sewta will work with relevant partners to investigate opportunities to pump prime new routes through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy.	1	1	p
1	BCT33 Sewta supports Community Transport and other flexible transport services to complement and enhance the mainstream public transport network, and will work with the Community Transport Association Cymru to support CT operators.	1	1	p
1	BCT45 Sewta will ensure infrastructure schemes are designed in accordance with the relevant standards and in consultation with access groups.	1	1	p
1	BCT50 Sewta will maintain regular liaison with adjoining regions and counties to identify potential requirements and issues related to cross border bus services.	1	1	p
1	BCT52 Sewta will continue to work with operators to expand voluntary partnerships and will investigate opportunities for statutory quality partnerships and quality contracts where it feels these may be necessary to improve the quality of services and network development.	1	1	p
2	BCT35 Through its capital programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for a Community Transport Enhancement Programme.	2	1	c
2	BCT38 Through its capital programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for a programme of interchange improvements	2	1	c
2	BCT46 Through its capital programme Sewta will implement a series of Bus Stop Improvement programmes.	2	1	c
2	BCT6 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will continue to provide funding for the Traveline Cymru call centre, based on agreed service standards	2	1	r
2	BCT20 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide reduced fares for young persons.	2	1	r
2	BCT3 Sewta supports the installation and use of fixed and bus mounted CCTV to enforce compliance with Bus Lane and Bus Stop Clearway Orders.	1	2	p
2	BCT4 Sewta supports the deployment of designated enforcement officers at locations where there is persistent abuse of existing Traffic Orders.	1	2	p
2	BCT5 Sewta supports region-wide common passenger information standards, including for real-time information, and will work with relevant partners to develop an information strategy which identifies key requirements and service providers.	1	2	p
2	BCT24 Sewta will maintain close liaison with Bus Users UK in Wales as a partner of the Sewta Board.	2	1	p
2	BCT29 Sewta will investigate opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to incentivise operators to maintain stability of the regional public transport network.	1	2	p
2	BCT37 Sewta supports further improvements to and expansion of public transport interchanges, and will work with relevant partners to develop measures to improve interchange at all key settlements and other appropriate locations.	2	1	p
2	BCT43 Sewta will work with the five local health boards and other relevant partners in the Sewta region to enable appropriate levels of access for patients, staff and visitors.	1	2	p
3	BCT15 Sewta supports a single integrated ticketing scheme for all public transport services in the region, and will work with relevant partners to develop a ticketing strategy.	1	3	p
3	BCT21 Sewta supports measures to improve safety and security and will work with relevant partners to ensure schemes implemented under its capital programme consider such measures and locations where there are issues are identified and addressed.	1	3	p
3	BCT36 Sewta will investigate further opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to develop supporting functions of the CT network, including Information Technology, service development and promotion, training and service feasibility.	3	1	p
4	BCT8 Through its capital programme, Sewta will provide funding to support information provision.	2	2	c
4	BCT27 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide Sunday services through payment of a higher rate.	2	2	r
4	BCT26 Sewta will review the results of future accessibility exercises to determine the impact of service changes following revisions to funding arrangements.	2	2	p
4	BCT40 Sewta will investigate opportunities to include dedicated rail feeder services as an integral requirement of the next round of rail franchising.	2	2	p
4	BCT42 Sewta will work with relevant partners to identify opportunities to integrate education and social services transport resources with the general bus and community transport network.	2	2	p
4	BCT47 Sewta will work with relevant partners to develop common standards for roadside infrastructure and associated bus mounted technology.	2	2	p
4	BCT53 Sewta will work with the member authorities and operators to identify the most appropriate contracting arrangements and move towards standard terms and conditions of contract.	2	2	p
6	BCT12 Through its capital programme, Sewta will provide funding for a Green Bus Fund.	2	3	c
6	BCT10 Sewta will investigate opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to deliver region-wide bus stop information and maintenance through a central unit / shared services arrangement	2	3	p
6	BCT28 Sewta will investigate opportunities to incentivise operators to provide Monday to Saturday evening services.	3	2	p
6	BCT51 Sewta will investigate opportunities to encourage network development in a way that maximises benefits for all.	2	3	p
9	BCT7 Through its RTSG programme, Sewta will incentivise operators to provide on board next stop information	3	3	r
9	BCT11 Sewta supports the establishment of a region-wide common public transport image (alongside operators' branding) and will work with relevant partners to develop a branding strategy	3	3	p
9	BCT16 Sewta maintains participation in the GoCymru card working group.	3	3	p
9	BCT30 Sewta will work with relevant partners to identify opportunities to provide limited stop express services as part of the TrawsCymru and Cardiff Capital Region Metro Proposals.	3	3	p
9	BCT39 Sewta will investigate opportunities to utilise RTSG funding to ensure consistent maintenance and operations of interchanges across the region.	3	3	p
9	BCT41 Sewta will investigate opportunities to provide bus based park and ride facilities, fully integrated with the main public transport network, through the Cardiff Capital Regfional Metro Proposals.	3	3	p
9	BCT44 Sewta will work with relevant partners (including operators, Capital Region Tourism, Brecon Beacons National Park and visitor attractions) to identify opportunities for the public transport network to contribute to the sustainable tourism agenda.	3	3	p
9	BCT48 Sewta will investigate opportunities to attract investment in road side infrastructure through advertising.	3	3	p

Notes

Priority Score = Importance x Timescale

Key

Importance Rating:	**Timescale Rating:**	**Type**
High priority = 1,	Short = 1,	C = Capital
Medium = 2	Medium = 2,	R = Revenue
Low = 3	Long = 3	P = Policy

5. Implementation Plans 2014/15

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. Many of the policies and proposals set out within this Strategy will need to be implemented by Sewta and its member local authorities, often in collaboration with Welsh Government (WG) and key stakeholders such as the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) and individual bus and third sector operators, the Community Transport Association (CTA Wales), Traveline Cymru Cymru, the Traffic Commissioner, bus users representatives and rail industry partners.

5.1.2. In terms of public funding, the main methods for delivering improvements are expected to be through the Regional Transport Services Grant (RTSG) and the Regional Transport Consortium Grant (RTCG). Although the terms of the All Wales Concessionary Fare Scheme dictate operators should financially be no better or worse off, the increase in patronage generated by the scheme has assisted operators improve the business case for new vehicles, which have benefitted all users. As a result this funding source remains a key element of operators' investment plans.

5.2. Regional Transport Services Grant 2014/15

5.2.1. The RTSG is an annual grant paid by WG to the Regional Transport Consortia (RTCs) for the purpose of supporting bus and community transport services. RTSG has been paid to Sewta since 1 April 2013. It replaces three government funding streams, the Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG) paid to local authorities, the Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG) paid to bus operators and the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI) paid to certain CT operators.

5.2.2. In 2013/14, Sewta received an RTSG of £11.4m. This compares to circa £15-16m RTSG and LTSG in 2011/12. At least 10% of the total amount must be spent on CT services. This funding is broadly for the following purposes:

- Commercial bus services kilometre support.
- Contracted bus services kilometre support.
- Community transport kilometre support.
- Other community transport support.
- Local authority support.
- Programme management.

Commercial bus services kilometre support

5.2.3. In 2013/14 Sewta supports commercial bus services by paying a grant to operators based on actual kilometres operated. This assists in maintaining the existing network of bus services. The conditions of the grant require Sewta to ensure that from 2014/15 onwards this funding supports the delivery of the improvements set out in this strategy.

5.2.4. Sewta proposes that for 2014/15, an appropriate proportion of RTSG bus services kilometre support funding will be set aside to be shared by those operators that achieve a certain quality standard only. In addition to some basic (bronze) requirements that are expected from all operators, there should be silver and gold levels, with each level allocated 15% of the total funding that has been set aside. Operators that achieve these higher level would receive a higher reimbursement per kilometre operated, thus providing an incentive for operators to improve services.

5.2.5. The following bronze standards are expected from all operators wishing to participate in the scheme. Any operator not fulfilling one or more of these standards will not be eligible for funding. It is planned that the standards that need to be achieved for bronze level will increase in future years.

5.2.6.

- All vehicles must be fitted with an operational and approved ITSO compliant Smartcard enabled Electronic Ticket Machine.
- A written customer complaint procedure must be in place.
- All drivers to have valid Public Service Vehicle (PSV) driving licence and Driver Qualification Card (DQC).
- All drivers must be issued with uniform, and be required to wear it.
- The operator must participate in PlusBus schemes where applicable.

5.2.7. Welsh Government is also considering the development of a Public Transport Charter for Disabled Passengers, which may be extended to cover all passengers. Once this is completed it is envisaged it could become a prerequisite for RTSG eligibility.

5.2.8. To achieve, silver and gold level, operators must achieve a number of points. Table 4.1 sets out the standards, and the points that can be earned with each. Table 4.2 sets out the points required for each standard. It is planned that the number of points required to achieve silver and gold level will increase over time. Similarly, the number of standards with which points can be earned may increase over time, thereby ensuring continuing improvement.

5.2.9. Whilst the intention behind this system is to encourage the improvement of bus services, there is a risk their implementation could jeopardise marginal services, with unintended consequences of service withdrawals. Therefore further modelling work is required to ascertain the full impact. Accordingly the scoring system is subject to further work.

Table 5.1: Quality standards for enhanced levels

Standard	Points available
Bus product - average age of fleet in years	<6yrs=30; <9yrs=20, <12yrs=10
Bus product - Proportion of vehicles achieving EURO III standard	>90%=24; >60%=16; >30%=8
Bus product - Proportion of vehicles achieving EURO IV standard	>90%=18; >60%=12; >30%=6
Bus product - Proportion of vehicles achieving EURO V standard	>90%=12; >60%=8; >30%=4
Bus product - Proportion of vehicles fitted with CCTV	>90%=24; >60%=16; >30%=8
Bus product - Proportion of vehicles using of alternative fuels	>90%=12; >60%=8; >30%=4
Bus product - Proportion of vehicles with comfort/efficiency equipment (e.g. Greenroad)	>90%=24; >60%=16; >30%=8
Information - Provision of unscheduled service changes information to passengers (on website, Twitter, Facebook, Traveline Cymru or equivalent)	30
Information - Proportion of vehicles fitted with next stop information	>90%=24; >60%=16; >30%=8
Ticketing - Availability of reduced fares for young persons over 16	24
Ticketing - Participation in Daily Network Rider scheme	30
Ticketing - Participation in Weekly Network Rider scheme	24

Training - Proportion of drivers having completed Disability Awareness CPC module	>90%=24; >60%=16; >30%=8
Training - Proportion of drivers completing safe and fuel efficient driving Awareness CPC module	>90%=24; >60%=16; >30%=8
Proportion of vehicles fitted with destination blinds	>90%=18; >60%=12; >30%=6

Table 5.2: Points required for enhanced levels

Maximum available:	342
Minimum number of points required for silver level in 2014/15:	140
Minimum number of points required for gold level in 2014/15:	228

5.2.10. Sewta has considered whether some of the RTSG support for bus services should be allocated on a bus service hours operated basis (as opposed to kilometres operated) as many of the costs of bus services are dependent on hours of operation, not service distance.

5.2.11. There is an increased administrative burden associated with the use of a time based; therefore at this stage, the RTSG will retain its distance based criteria to enable to scheme to fully bed in and enable trend analysis to be undertaken.

5.2.12. Sewta will review whether the new generation of electronic ticket machines enable the efficient monitoring of punctuality and reliability. This may enable the addition of a relevant standard in future years.

5.2.13. In addition to raising the quality of service provision, it is also intended to utilise the RTSG as a mechanism to incentivise the extension of service operation into the evenings and on Sundays. It is however appreciated this creates and additional administrative burden that may not be recouped; therefore in the first instance Sewta will pay an increased rate of RTSG for services commencing operating on Sundays and review opportunities to incentivise evening operation to reflect potential levels of demand.

5.2.14. The precise application of points against the various standards and how it affects the level of payment will require further modelling and this will be undertaken during the consultation period.

Contracted bus services kilometre support

5.2.15. In 2013/14, Sewta supports contracted bus services in a similar way to commercial bus services, by paying a grant to operators based on actual kilometres operated. During the year, it will identify the precise number of kilometres that are commercial as opposed to supported.

5.2.16. Sewta proposes that these payments may be phased out as contracts expire. Instead Sewta will provide funding to enable additional payments to bus operators as part of the contract for each service, with these payments being made to deliver quality improvements.

Community Transport Bus Km Support

5.2.17. In 2013/14, Sewta supports community bus services by paying a grant to operators based on actual kilometres operated. It is proposed to continue to provide a km-based grant to CT operators in 2014/15, with a proportion of funding set aside to be shared by those CT operators that achieve certain quality standards only.

5.2.18. While the overall scheme will work similarly to the one for main bus services, there will be some differences in the quality standards for enhanced levels. Table 5.3 sets out the standards currently under consideration:

Table 5.3 Proposed quality standards for Community Transport kilometre support scheme 2014/15

Mandatory Outcomes	Section 19	Section 22
Drivers completing MiDAS training	✓	✓
Customer feedback system in place	✓	✓
Provision of kilometre data	✓	✓
Vehicles conforming to EURO III standard or above	✓	✓
Provision of regularly updated information on CTA Wales page on Traveline Cymru*	✓	✓
Optional Outcomes	**Section 19**	**Section 22**
Drivers completing SAFED training	✓	✓
Achievement of CTA Quality Mark Level 1	✓	✓
Vehicles fitted with Smartcard enabled ETMs (assuming funding available for equipment from LA/RTC)		✓

*live search facility for Section22 semi/scheduled services to be discussed with Traveline for 2014-15

5.2.19. Furthermore, Sewta will introduce a mechanism to restrict eligibility to RTSG funding to those services it believes are of value to passengers. One of the fundamental objectives of the RTSG regime is a move to a more outcomes based funding mechanism. Accordingly the funding should only be available for services that are of value to the travelling public. To this end, Sewta will exclude mileage for positioning vehicles between the depot and genuine service operation.

Local authority support

5.2.20. Although there is no statutory duty to provide subsidised local bus services, local authorities have discretion to support bus and other public transport services that best meet local needs, take account of social inclusion, improve accessibility and increase their attractiveness as a primary travel choice.

5.2.21. Under Transport legislation the role of the local authority is to identify where such gaps in the local bus service network exist and subject to the available resources and potential passenger demand, exercise their powers to provide funding to certain bus and other local transport services.

5.2.22. As most of the bus services in the Sewta region are provided on a commercial basis by private operators, tendered services by their nature are supplementary and extend the times or the communities to which a commercial service operates. However, some operate on a demand responsive “dial a ride” basis and are provided by community transport operators using Section 22 permits.

5.2.23. Support for bus services has been under continued financial pressure since 2008-09. This trend culminated in January 2012 when WG announced a 25% cut in Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG) paid to local Councils, and the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) grants, to be phased in by April 2013 as the Regional Transport Services grant (RTSG) was introduced. This has put considerable pressure on both the commercial and subsidised bus services.

5.2.24. The full impact of the BSOG cut on the commercial network, in terms of reduced service levels is yet to be fully felt. Fare levels have increased above the rate of inflation and the combined network remains fragile at a time when passenger growth needs to be encouraged.

5.2.25. During 2013/14, Sewta is providing RTSG funding to member local authorities to be used for contracted bus services and associated services such as public transport publicity. This funding is a direct replacement for the LTSG previously provided by WG to local authorities, albeit at a lower level.

5.2.26. From 2014/15, RTSG will be used to provide an equitable level of service provision and connectivity across the region, with WG funding no longer being used to extend local service provision. Sewta proposes to continue to provide funding to its member local authorities to use for contracted bus services of regional significance that is bus routes that connect key settlements, or service key corridors, or provide access to key employment, education and health locations.

5.2.27. Peer reviews will be undertaken to ensue that the contracted routes that receive RTSG payments going forward meet this criteria. The objective of this funding stream is to maximise the provision of public transport connections between two or more of the core settlements that are identified within the Wales Spatial Plan and Regional Transport Plan.

5.2.28. Quality improvements could be delivered through increased contract specifications. Sewta further proposes to develop a standard contract template to be phased in for any contracted bus services financed through Sewta funding.

5.2.29. Contracted bus services that are not of regional significance would continue to be the responsibility of the relevant local authority.

Other Uses of RTSG Funding

5.2.30. Through the RTSG, there is the opportunity to provide funding for specific actions in support of this strategy. In 2013/14 this included funding to Traveline Cymru to support the operation of the call centre[23]. This will continue in to 2014/15.

5.2.31. Information is essential to the delivery of an integrated public transport service as well as encouraging passenger growth and modal shift. Whilst some operators provide assistance in the production and / or installation of printed information, this is not universally undertaken, resulting in an inconsistent approach to the delivery of good quality roadside timetable information across the region.

5.2.32. In addition, those operators who do participate are at a financial disadvantage. In order to address these issues Sewta proposes that a proportion of RTSG funding will be used on an equitable basis to provide printed information to a regional quality standard.

[23] The Traveline Cymru call centre was previously funded by charges per call made in respect of a bus operator's service. Since 1st April 2013, Sewta has reduced funding available to bus operators in kilometre support by an equivalent amount and the funding direct to Traveline Cymru. This is more equitable.

This would be achieved by a minimal reduction in the rate of km support, to ensure all operators contribute at a rate commensurate with the size of operation.

5.2.33. It is proposed a production unit / shared service arrangement will be formed with responsibility for the delivery of roadside timetable information to a regional standard. The operating costs of the unit will be funded through Regional Transport Services Grant and represent approximately £0.003 - £0.005 per km of operated bus service mileage. Further work is being undertaken in 2014/15 to determine the level of funding required and ensure those operators who currently assist with information provision are financially no better or worse off. To provide coverage across the region, the production unit will initially utilise existing resources within local authorities / bus operators.

5.2.34. The Traveline Cymru database is a unique asset and will act as the data source for roadside timetable information. The integrity of data is vital to fulfil this role and local authorities, operators and Traveline Cymru must work together to ensure its accuracy. Delivery is best provided through the local authorities, working with the operators, to ensure that the design is consistent with regard to stop names, layout and codes, and will follow guidance from Bus Users UK and Access Groups.

5.2.35. The initial focus will be to produce comprehensive timetable information for all bus stations, rail stations, high priority routes and key locations. Subsequent roll out (subject to satisfactory results) would deliver comprehensive road side timetable information along the strategic bus corridors followed by local routes.

5.2.36. This phased approach will ensure that resources are focused on those locations that generate the greatest use or are strategic locations. Future provision is likely to include Real Time Passenger Information on high priority routes and at key public transport locations (subject to successful RTP funding bids). The responsibilities of the unit are likely to evolve to take account of such developments.

5.3. Regional Transport Consortium Grant (Sewta capital programme)

5.3.1. The RTCG is an annual grant paid by WG to the Regional Transport Consortia (RTCs) for the purpose of delivering transport priorities that contribute towards the objective of integrated, efficient, effective, accessible, affordable and sustainable transport systems. The RTCG is a capital grant that can only be used for spending on the purchase or creation of assets. In 2013/14 Sewta has initially been awarded a RTCG of £12.7m.

5.3.2. This section outlines the various elements of the strategy that are to be implemented through the RTCG funding stream

5.3.3. The budget allocation for 2014/15 is currently being determined by the Welsh Government; therefore, this programme is based on the schemes set out in the Sewta Regional Transport Plan and 2013/14 Delivery Plan. Further details of Sewta's annual capital programmes can be found in the relevant years Delivery Plan and Annual Progress Report.

Bus priority corridors

5.3.4. The reliability of services is a key influence on the propensity to use the bus and community transport network; therefore Sewta maintains a programme of Bus Corridor Improvements. The initial programme was developed in 2008 following a study of 10 key radial routes to determine 'pinch-points' and identify potential alleviation measures.

5.3.5. The findings of the study are now being reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the characteristics of the corridors (such as changes in land use and associated trip generation). Likewise the review also provides an opportunity to review other corridors that have become strategically significant due to such land use changes.

5.3.6. The review is progressing, with the results informing the 2014/15 programme of Bus Priority Corridor improvements.

Interchanges

5.3.7. Interchanges provide a focal point for the bus network. Accordingly Sewta has developed a programme of interchange enhancements to identify key interchanges and ensure they provide facilities commensurate with Sewta aspirations. These are being progressed through a series of discrete projects. The scope of each project will be determined on a case-by-case basis through the Sewta Peer Review Process.

Bus Stop Upgrade Programme

5.3.8. Bus stops are often the users' first physical point of contact with the bus network and act as a shop window for the level of service that can be expected. Bus stops also provide a vital source of information for potential users and provide features to increase user comfort / accessibility (e.g. raised boarding platforms, seating and shelters).

5.3.9. Sewta will continue with a programme of bus stop upgrades to ensure all stops have a minimum provision of:

- Bus Stop Flag (including Stop name, service numbers and Traveline Cymru contact information/Stop Identification codes)
- Raised Boarding Platform with tactile paving
- Timetable case
- In addition, key stops will also be provided with a shelter, including perch seating

Information Upgrade Programme

5.3.10. The provision of Real Time Passenger Information assists user confidence that their service will arrive. It also assists users plan the use of alternative services. Accordingly, Sewta will consider the expansion of Real Time Passenger Information across the region in coordination with bus operators to make best utilisation of on-board equipment.

5.3.11. The decreasing capital costs of 'at stop' Real Time Passenger Information equipment and growth in 'smartphone' ownership and application development provide new opportunities to increase provision. However, the technology and capabilities of Real Time Passenger Information systems are developing at a fast rate. It is therefore essential that Sewta takes the necessary steps to ensure the chosen system(s) provide best value and longevity. To this end Sewta will commission a research study identifying potential options that are suitable for the mixed topography of the region. The results will inform future investment programmes.

Community Transport Capital Enhancement Programme (CTCEP)

5.3.12. The Community Transport sector plays a vital role in the Sewta transport network, providing access to many residents who do not have access to a private car or are unable to access conventional buses. In many cases, services are provided through volunteers or have limited opportunity to significantly invest in new vehicles or back

office equipment. In addition, some services require the use of adapted vehicles, which has significant cost implications.

5.3.13. In order to assist such groups maintain or expand provision, Sewta operates a Community Transport Capital Enhancement Programme. This programme is scheduled to continue as part of the 2014/15 programme. An indicative budget of £xx has been allocated under the CTCEP, which will be allocated following the assessment of bids by eligible organisations.

Green Bus Fund

5.3.14. The Green Bus fund is an initiative available in England and Scotland that supports bus companies and local authorities by providing grant aid to cover the higher purchase cost of new low carbon buses compared to standard vehicles. Its main purpose is to support and hasten the large scale introduction of low carbon buses.

5.3.15. At present funding is not available within Wales; however Sewta will work with partners to identify opportunities to implement a Green Bus scheme. The actual budget requirement will require further development to determine eligibility and scope. The DfT has recorded approximately 1,800 Public Services Vehicles operating in Wales; therefore it will be necessary to obtain baseline data regarding the current composition / emissions standards of the Welsh fleet in order to identify potential budget requirements. Sewta is collecting this information as part of the RTSG assessment criteria.

5.3.16. The South East Wales Integrated Transport Task Force Report was submitted to the Welsh Government in March 2013. The report includes a range of proposals for enhancing transport provision across the region. These would allow good progress to be made towards the creation of an integrated public transport system (Metro) and provide funding for bus priority corridors, interchanges and bus partnership schemes.

5.3.17. In May 2013 the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport announced that she had commissioned a further study to explore the potential impact that a Metro could have on the region. An executive summary of the study was published on 21 October 2013 titled ‘A Cardiff Capital Regional Metro: Impact Study’.

5.3.18. In the report, integrated ticketing and information are stated as being fundamental to the Metro. These are strategic priorities, and will need to be effectively addressed as the development of the Metro proposals progresses.

5.3.19. The study makes limited mention of the bus network, other than a need for the Metro network to interface and integrate with the denser local bus network. A key component of any Metro will need to be the integration of local bus services, including funding to deliver a more joined up public transport network with integrated services, timetables and ticketing across transport modes. This will ensure that the proposed Metro will improve the travel experience of all public transport passengers.

5.3.20. Public funding support for bus services from Welsh Government and local authorities has been reduced in 2012/13 and 2013/14, as budgets have come under increasing pressure. These have resulted in reduced service levels. Funding levels in 2014/15 and beyond remain uncertain, but there are risks of further reductions. Should these arise, they will make it more difficult to achieve the objectives set out in this strategy.

5.4. Legislative Measures

5.4.1. As set out in the RTP, Sewta supports the introduction of a more efficient and effective bus regulatory framework. However, the current devolution settlement, as it applies to the Transport Act 1985 and successor legislation, applies constraints to public authorities in Wales in enhancing bus services. As stated in Sewta's response to the Commission on Welsh Devolution (Silk Commission), it would be advantageous if any changes required to the legislation governing bus regulation were within the competencies of the Welsh Assembly.

5.4.2. This would enable the Assembly to review the situation and focus legislative change on working to prevent wasteful competition, giving local authorities the power to moderate it where it is having, or likely to have, an adverse effect on the local public transport network.

5.4.3. It is however noted that Sewta has developed an excellent working relationship with the regions bus operators, which has enabled delivery of key enhancements through partnership working. These include bus priority schemes, fleet renewals and provision of roadside information. The continuation of this approach through the use of Voluntary Quality Partnerships would provide an opportunity to maintain these arrangements.

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1.1. The strategy includes a number of measures to maintain and improve the bus network. In order to assess the effectiveness of the strategy in achieving its objectives and demonstrating the value of the subsidies received, it is essential that a robust monitoring plan is implemented.

6.1.2. In order to be effective, it is also vital the plan isn't too onerous on any party, given the need to increase the efficiency of resources. Accordingly the monitoring plan makes the best use of existing data sources and information collected as part of the RTSG scheme requirements. These are defined in table 6.1: These will be reviewed as implementation of the strategy progresses.

Table 6.1 – Strategy Monitoring Criteria

Attribute	Measurement Criteria	Source
Access to Services	The proportion of households within a 60 minute travel time threshold of a 'Key Centre' between 10am and 12pm on a Tuesday by public transport	WG – Monitoring the National Transport Plan
Patronage	Change in Global patronage	RTSG returns
Service Km operated	Change in global service km operated	RTSG returns
Reliability	Change in user satisfaction	Bus User UK Surveys WG NTP monitoring Sewta online survey
At stop Information	Change in user satisfaction	
Safety and security	Change in user satisfaction	
Cleanliness of vehicles	Change in user satisfaction	
Customer Feedback	Number of operators with customer complaints procedure	RTSG evaluation
Vehicle standards	Average Fleet Age	RTSG evaluation
	Number of vehicles fitted with CCTV	RTSG evaluation
	Number of vehicles meeting:	RTSG evaluation
	Euro 3	RTSG evaluation
	Euro 4	RTSG evaluation
	Euro 5	RTSG evaluation
	Number of vehicles using alternative fuels	RTSG evaluation
	Number vehicles with comfort/efficiency equipment (e.g. Greenroad)	RTSG evaluation
	Number of vehicles fitted with audio/visual stop announcement	RTSG evaluation
	Number of buses fitted with ITSO compliant ticket machines	RTSG evaluation
	Number of vehicles fitted with destination blinds	RTSG evaluation

Training	Number of drivers having completed Disability Awareness CPC module	RTSG evaluation
	Number of drivers completing safe and fuel efficient driving Awareness CPC module	RTSG evaluation
Ticketing	Number of operators participating in Daily network Rider Scheme	RTSG evaluation
	Number of operators participating in weekly network Rider Scheme	RTSG evaluation
	Number of young persons ticket schemes in operation	RTSG evaluation
Infrastructure	Number of bus Priority Schemes in operation	Sewta Annual Progress Report Monitoring
	Number of Bus stops upgraded	Sewta Annual Progress Report Monitoring
	Number of interchanges upgraded	Sewta Annual Progress Report Monitoring

6.1.3. Baseline data will be recorded as part of the RTSG scheme implementation in 2014/15. In order to make best use of existing reporting arrangements, it is intended the results of the Bus and Community Monitoring strategy will be published as an annex to the RTP Annual Progress Report.

Appendix A - Key Regional Settlements

Settlement	Local Authority
Ebbw Vale	**Blaenau Gwent**
Tredegar	Blaenau Gwent
Brynmawr	Blaenau Gwent
Abertillery	Blaenau Gwent
Bridgend	**Bridgend**
Maesteg	Bridgend
Porthcawl	Bridgend
Pyle	Bridgend
Pencoed	Bridgend
Blackwood	**Caerphilly**
Caerphilly/Bedwas	**Caerphilly**
Risca	Caerphilly
Islwyn	Caerphilly
Rhymney	Caerphilly
Abertridwr/Senghenydd	Caerphilly
Cardiff	**Cardiff**
Merthyr Tydfil	**Merthyr Tydfil**
Treharris/Nelson	Merthyr Tydfil/Caerphilly
Abergavenny	**Monmouthshire**
Caldicot	Monmouthshire
Chepstow	**Monmouthshire**
Monmouth	Monmouthshire
Magor	Monmouthshire
Usk	Monmouthshire
Newport	**Newport**
Caerleon	Newport
Aberdare	**Rhondda Cynon Taf**
Pontypridd	**Rhondda Cynon Taf**
Mountain Ash/Abercynon	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Llantrisant/Pontyclun	**Rhondda Cynon Taf**
Tonyrefail	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Beddau/Church Village	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Rhonnda Fach	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Rhondda Fawr	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Llanharan	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Porth	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Cwmbran	**Torfaen**
Pontypool	**Torfaen**
Blaenavon	Torfaen
Barry	**Vale of Glamorgan**
Penarth	Vale of Glamorgan
Llantwit Major	Vale of Glamorgan
Dinas Powys	Vale of Glamorgan
Cowbridge	Vale of Glamorgan

Appendix B - Total Bus Stops in Sewta Region, by Local Authority*

Authority Area	***Number of Bus Stops****
Bridgend	928
Blaenau Gwent	747
Caerphilly	980
Cardiff	1690
Merthyr Tydfil	527
Monmouthshire	708
Newport	694
RCT	1581
Torfaen	740
Vale of Glamorgan	794
Total	**9389**

*Traveline Cymru Cymru 2011

Appendix C – Glossary of Abbreviations*

Abbreviation	Full Title
BSOG	Bus Service Operators Grant
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CPC	Certificate of Professional Competence
CPT	Confederation of Passenger Transport
CT	Community Transport
CTA Wales	Community Transport Association Wales
CTCEP	Community Transport Capital Enhancement Programme
DfT	Department for Transport
GP	General Practitioner
ITSO	International Transport Smartcard Organisation
LA	Local Authority
LTSG	Local Transport Services Grant
NAT Group	New Adventure Travel
NHS	National Health Service
NTP	National Transport Plan
RTC	Regional Transport Consortia
RTCG	Regional Transport Consortia Grant
RTP	Regional Transport Plan
RTPI	Real Time Passenger Information
RTSG	Regional Transport Services Grant
SAFED	Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving
TfL	Transport for London
WG	Welsh Government