

Transport Delivery Committee

Date	11 June 2018
Report title	Clarification of National Express West Midlands' consultation process on network reviews

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:

Note National Express West Midlands' position.

1.0 Purpose

National Express West Midlands would like clarify that we have an agreed formal consultation process for customers, the public and councillors. We expect all comments and views to come through that process so they can be fairly assessed. Therefore we will not accept petitions from the public or councillors **about routes that are subject to a live NXWM consultation process**.

2.0 Background

National Express West Midlands and TfWM have agreed a consultation process for carrying out network reviews. This usually involves several stages of public consultation. For the 2017/18 south Birmingham service review, we received 10,000 responses, which we used to inform the final network design. This process has been designed to ensure that the views of existing and potential public transport users are considered when considering our networks.

We would ask councillors to wholeheartedly support this process in the interests of openness and good practice.

Our network planners are very skilful and experienced at designing public questionnaires to properly interrogate our customers' current and future travel patterns. The questions are specially designed to decouple passengers' thinking from specific current routes and drill down to their core transport needs. We are trying to find out what people really do and what they really want from their bus service. We think using this process makes for a better network design for our customers/your constituents - and public transport in the region.

The petitions we receive usually take the form of “Save the 35!”

This blunt call for action is unhelpful to the network review process as it does not necessarily address or draw out the detail of what our genuine passengers are trying to tell us. For example:

- Our bus routes are very long. Are people saying they want the entire route saving exactly as it is? Or just the bit they use? And which bit is that - the end, the other end, a section in the middle?
- Do people just want to travel on a bus that says 35 on the front? If a bus with a different number took them from the same A to the same B, would they be satisfied?
- Petitions skew the data in our consultations. For instance, in the first round of the South Birmingham network review consultation, 70% of respondents were in favour of the changes we were proposing in Warstock. Then a petition was launched and the figure in favour dropped to 55%.

3.0 Proposal

If members of the public bring issues about bus services that are under a live consultation to elected members, we would ask that they point them towards the consultation.

If a route is not part of a live NXWM consultation process, we **will** accept petitions about it. These will be used to feed into any review process, along with ticket data and passenger counts.

Ali Bell - head of external communications, National Express West Midlands