

Ms Roisin Kelly  
Committee Clerk  
Committee Office, Room 402  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
BELFAST  
BT4 3XX

25<sup>th</sup> August 2010

Dear Ms Kelly

**Re: Committee Stage of the Transport Bill**

I welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft Transport Bill. On behalf of Ilex URC I would like to make the following comments:

The review of public transport provision and the introduction of the 3 tiered organisational arrangement, which will include a Government tier responsible for policy, legislation and regulation, a public transport agency (within the Department for Regional Development) which will be responsible for specifying service requirements and managing contracts and an operational tier which will consist of the operators of public transport services will make the planning and delivery of public transport more efficient and operators more accountable.

With regard to the specifics of the Bill I wish to make the following comments:

**Part 1 Public Passenger Transport Services**

**Service Agreements – Section 2**

We would welcome section 2 (2) stating that service agreements will be awarded in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 1370/2007. This will ensure that the public service obligation is met and that there is an adequate level of service provision for all members of the public. The service permit element of the Bill will ensure that services not currently delivered as part of the contracted network can be competitively tendered and delivered by an alternative operator, thereby ensuring as wide a choice of services as possible.

### **Matters to which Department must have regard - Section 6**

When considering an application and granting a permit it is critical that the Department considers other operators who provide public transport services and their ability to provide similar services. The Department must also take account of the recommendations of these operators as the granting of a new permit may have a detrimental effect on services provided on the same road or on a route nearby. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to make an amendment to or extend a current route rather than grant a new permit to a separate operator. Recommendations made by other organizations, such as the Consumer Council, will also assist the Department in making the most informed choice which will reflect the greatest need of the general public.

### **Duration – Section 7**

The granting of the permit for three years (Section 7 (1)) will ensure that the route selection and service provision is continually reviewed and amendments to the route can be made to reflect the changing needs of the local service users.

## **Part 3 Consumer Council**

### **Forward Work Programme – Section 23**

We welcome the introduction of the Consumer Council's Forward Work Programme which will be published before the start of each financial year. This will enable greater accountability of an organization representing the views and issues of local consumers and ensure that they are adequately undertaking their role in protecting the interests of the users. It will also assist the public in gaining a better understanding of the service that they can expect from the Consumer Council.

### **Co-operation between the Department and the Consumer Council – Section 24**

The arrangement for greater co-operation and exchange of information between the Department and the Consumer Council will have a positive effect on the resolution of issues particularly affecting members of the public and the service they receive from public transport operators.

## **Part 5 Grants**

### **Services for benefit of certain sections of the public – Section 33**

#### **Services in certain areas – Section 34**

#### **Advice and information, etc – Section 35**

We welcome the inclusion of these sections. The funding of services for the elderly and those living in rural areas is critical to addressing issues of isolation. The funding for the Community Transport Association is also noted and their advisory role is key to ensuring that smaller transport operators receive the advice and training they need to ensure that they provide high quality services. The provision of funding for the supply of fully accessible vehicles and services is noted. This again will ensure that the issues of isolation are not experienced by people with disabilities who would otherwise not be able to travel on in accessible vehicles, or who would not have a service in place without this



additional financial support from Government to ensure that these necessary services are operated.

## **Part 6 Miscellaneous and Supplementary**

### **Conduct of persons at bus stations – Section 42**

The introduction of powers relating to the conduct of persons at bus stations will bring the legislation into line with that which already exists for railway stations. This can only have a positive impact on passenger and staff safety and will ensure that misconduct of any nature is duly dealt with through the appropriate legal process.

### **Shared transport facilities – Section 43**

The sharing of transport facilities will provide positive benefits for all users. This will improve journey times for people travelling with a number of providers by enabling them to change providers at the one location and negate the need to have to travel to a separate location to make an onward journey with another service provider.


### **Regulations – general – Section 46**

The proposal for the regulation of ticketing machines and systems is welcomed. The introduction of integrated ticketing will have a positive effect on passenger transport and make journeys more efficient for all travelling. It should encourage greater use of public transport as people will be able to buy a single ticket which can be used on a number of different operator's services if necessary.

In conclusion, we are content with the Transport Bill as laid out and believe that it will lead to a much more efficient and effective public transport network which will provide positive benefits to all users. The proposals will ensure that some of the less commercially viable routes are still retained, particularly in rural areas, to provide essential services to dwellers in these areas. Overall it will enable the strategic planning of public transport services to ensure that they are designed to encourage the greatest possible use.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

  
**Gerard McCleave**  
**Director of Strategy and Regeneration**

