

Mobility and Access Committee Scotland (MACS) Main Committee Meeting.

**Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 26 January 2010
Conference Room 4/5, Victoria Quay.**

Present:

Anne MacLean, Convener

Members:

Andrew Holmes (AH)
John Ballantine (JB)
Heather Fiskien (HF)
Clare Byrne (CB)
Bob Benson (BB)
Muriel Masson (MM)
Jane Horsburgh (JH)
Jane Steven (JS)
Shonagh Terry (ST)
Grahame Lawson (GL)

Apologies:

James Glover
Steven Boyd
Annette Monaghan

Secretariat:

Bill Brash (BBrash) Sponsor Team Leader
Judith Ballantine (JB), Secretary
Jean Goldie, Assistant Secretary

Observers:

Archna Patel (AP) Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
Hugh Flinn (HF) Passengers' View Scotland
Brian Juffs (BJ), Scottish Government Senior Bus Policy Adviser

Palantypist:

Laura Harrison

Welcome/Introductions

1. The Convener welcomed Grahame Lawson (GL) to the meeting. She also welcomed Laura Harrison, the palantypist, and re-iterated the need to speak clearly and to avoid having individual discussions while the main meeting is ongoing.

Minutes of the last meeting held on 15 December 2009

2. It was agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record.

Matters arising

3. HF asked why changes had been made to the previously agreed composition of the working groups. The Secretariat explained the need to allocate the work fairly and ensure the non-duplication of effort. The Convener said that there may be a need to streamline the work streams depending on whether the work becomes too onerous..

Secretariat update

4. Bill Brash (BBrash) provided the Secretariat update.

Presentation from Alistair Richards, Managing Director of Trams in Edinburgh (TIE).

5. AR introduced himself to Members and gave his presentation, which included an overview of the tram specifications as well as the test runs which had been carried out on mocked up models using guide dogs and their owners.

6. He outlined the plans and locations of wheelchair and priority seating. The Convener raised the issue of lack of distinctive signage for priority seating – she pointed out that if luggage is placed in front of these signs other passengers will not be aware that the seating is needed. AR advised that plenty of luggage racks are available so there should not be the need to place it on the seats. He also stated that each tram would have a conductor, who would be trained to ensure that luggage was placed in the appropriate spaces. The possibility of putting signage on windows to indicate the location of the designated wheelchair space was discussed.

7. JH explained how guidance regarding tactile paving will direct people with assistance dogs to the correct tram door (at the tram stop). The use of colour on the floor as a delineator was also explained. The group went on to discuss the trams' audio visual displays units, which will provide public information announcements.

8. The trams have capacity for a total of 250 passengers (standing and sitting). JB asked how ambulant disabled people would be able to navigate within a tram which is full to capacity. AR pointed out that the priority seating is positioned so that it is easily accessible regardless of how busy the tram is. HF suggested that this might be rectified to some degree by installing horizontal handrails between the turning points and the doors.

9. The group went on to discuss the locations of tram stops. The Convener sought re-assurance that the stops would be sited sensibly. AR confirmed that there would be one stop on Princes Street. He also said that the stop had been sighted there as a result of balancing the requirement to have both buses and trams, bus and tram stops being mutually exclusive. The current block of 4 bus stops on Princes Street will reduce to 3 once the tram stop is in place. AR said that consideration of a future additional stop would be based on evidence of need.

10. A discussion ensued on the diverse and difficult nature of the problems involved in making Waverly Station and its environs accessible. This has led to Haymarket being the preferred site for the tram interchange.

11. The discussion moved on to the fully integrated ticketing system which will be in use on both trams and LRT buses. AR advised that it was likely that whatever decision was taken in the future in relation to concessionary fares, it would apply to trams as well. The ticketing validation technology, its location and arrangements for its operation were also discussed. The Convener highlighted the problems with the current concessionary fares card; mainly that it is not always obvious which part, or side of the card should make contact with the card reader. HF also noted the problem of cognitive and learning difficulties as well as mental health problems.

12. MACS agreed to continue to liaise with AR and TIE in future and also wished to visit the tram mock up once it had been completed.

Introduction from Jonathon Pryce, Director of Transport Directorate

13. Jonathon Pryce (JP) thanked MACS for inviting him to attend. He noted his awareness of some of the work that MACS had been involved in, and hoped that Members would discuss with him the issues they felt were of significant importance, as well as the projects they were working on.

14. He went on to outline the relationship between Transport Scotland and the Transport Directorate, and noted the importance of the 2006 National Transport Strategy Publication which would be updated this year.

15. He highlighted the current financial climate, the environmental obligations which we all need to face up to, and the various impending elections, all of which will influence work in which MACS is involved. He also noted his membership of the Independent Living in Scotland (ILiS) Core Reference Group.

16. The Convener provided a brief overview of MACS' recent history, how she thought that their contribution had been limited due to lack of members for the majority of the year, but that the group was now gaining momentum.

17. She went on to say that despite the current financial climate she would be very disappointed to see disability issues fall by the wayside due to economic constraints.

18. JS advised that she was concerned that the Scottish Government has many promising high level objectives, but it is not always clear how they will deliver. She was also concerned that the Concordat and resulting lack of ring fencing would impact on services for disabled people. Finally, she said she had been looking at Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's disability equality scheme – she wondered if the other RTPs should be producing similar schemes.

19. In response to JS's first point on high level objectives, JP agreed, saying that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth was aware that there are a significant number of strategies. He agreed that they are all beneficial but it would be worrying if they could not be delivered.

20. With regard to ring-fencing, JP stated that it was a clear strategic decision that allows local authorities to have more flexibility – he thought it important that they were not micromanaged by central government.

21. Finally, with regard to disability equality schemes he said that all public bodies had a duty to comply with DDA.

22. The group went on to discuss the problems with bus planning and accessible services in rural areas, and the difficulties in creating joined up services. JP noted the challenges inherent in rural areas and acknowledged that they are very different to those in more urban ones. The Convener initiated a discussion on funding for other transport services such as social work services and community car schemes across different areas.

23. JS asked when the NTS delivery plan would be available. JP said that the NTS Stakeholder Group, of which the Convener was a member, was currently revising the plan. The Secretary agreed to distribute the latest draft to Members.

ACTION – Secretary

Presentation from Stuart McNeill, Manager, Traveline Scotland

24. Stuart McNeill (SM) stood in for John Elliot, the Chief Executive, who was unable to attend due to a conflicting engagement. He introduced the work of Traveline Scotland, and outlined its remit as a phone-based organisation which is currently expanding to use web-based and mobile phone technology.

25. He noted that the organisation had approached the 32 Scottish local authorities to ask for details of transport providers and services in their areas,

in order to improve their own information database, however, only 4 responded. The Convener suggested that MACS might approach those who did not, and ask them to provide that information.

26. HF asked whether it was possible to integrate car journeys with public transport journeys planned using Traveline. SM advised that it was not but that Traffic Scotland (www.trafficscotland.org) would be able to provide this.

27. GL thanked SM for his presentation, and noted that Transport for London operate an exemplar website, which provides very useful information in a coherent and accessible format.

28. BJ suggested that Traveline Scotland send MACS regular updates on current activity. SM agreed to keep the Secretary updated, to allow the Members to receive progress reports.

ACTION – Secretary

Feedback from Members on meetings attended

Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum (MM):

29. The discussion went on to consider the composition of the membership of the Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum in relation to members who also sit on the Glasgow Access Panel (GAP). HF thought that there was a need to acknowledge the limitations of Access Panels. JH agreed, saying that while they are an invaluable resource, they work on a volunteer basis.

30. The Convener mentioned the REACT system and the letter that she had written to Patrick Nyamurundira at First Scotrail indicating MACS' support for it and a willingness to help encourage increased installation. The Convener advised that she would write to First Scotrail to re-iterate this message.

ACTION – Convener

31. BJ noted that Waverly and Glasgow Central Stations (neither of which are under Scotrail control) have a general lack of bus information available. He advised that it had been difficult to pursue this and thought that it might be something that MACS could take up with Network Rail. The Secretary agreed that she would approach Chris Clark at Transport Scotland.

ACTION – Secretary

32. JH asked whether there was a timescale for provision of the Department for Transport's 'Access for All' funding. MM said that this was not clear. AP advised that she did not know how much ring-fenced funding was available, but that JB would report on this after the next meeting of the DPTAC rail group.

33. The group agreed that it would be useful if a representative of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) would attend a future meeting.

ACTION – Secretariat

Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL) (MM):

34. MM noted the need to respond to Jim Hailstone at Transport Scotland with regard to the suspension of the disabled parking spaces at Central Station

which had been removed as part of the initial GARL works. As Transport Scotland now wish to respond to Glasgow City Council on this point, she agreed she would amend her previously drafted letter and send it to the Convener via the Secretary.

ACTION - MM

35. HF thought that it was the responsibility of the individual stations to sort out their parking facilities and not MACS. She was not happy that Glasgow Central kept dismissing the option of using the nearby NCP car park.

Outcome Based Approach for Public Bodies Workshop – Equalities Session (JG):

36. The Convener referred to the “Recommendations for MACS” section, particularly the second bullet point “these discussions should result in an equality impact assessment of the MACS work plan once a draft has been completed, but before it is finally approved by MACS.” saying that BB and JG should carry out an EQIA on the MACS work plan.

ACTION – JG/BB

National Performance Framework (JS):

37. JS presented her paper on the National Performance Framework, outlining the various strands of work including the Concordat with COSLA, Single Outcome Agreements and the National Conversation.

Blue Badge/Disabled Persons’ Parking Places (Scotland) Act 2009 (Secretariat):

38. The Secretariat provided an update on the work so far on the local authorities’ implementation of the Disabled Persons’ Parking Places (Scotland) Act 2009. A Scottish Government Implementation Working Group had been established to assist local authorities with the implementation of the provisions of the Act. The Working Group has representation from local authorities, the British Parking Association, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPOS) and Spina Bifida Scotland.

Blue Badge Scheme – Scotland

39. The Secretariat said that Blue Badge Scheme is currently being reviewed, in line with the reforms being undertaken in England and Wales. The eligibility criteria will be extended to likely include ex-service personnel, people with some severe mental health impairments and children under the age of 3 with specific medical conditions. The Blue Badge will be made more secure and linked to a national database. There will also be a move to Independent Medical Assessments. GL requested some background papers on the review, saying he was happy to accompany CB to meetings of the Working Group.

ACTION – Secretariat

Issues arising from the consultation response on Public Sector Equality Duty

40. BBenson outlined the work that he and JG had done on the response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Public Sector Equality Duty Specific Duties in relation to the Single Equality Duty Bill. It had proved quite challenging due to the short time scale available in which to complete it. He re-iterated the importance of the consultation as well as the fact there are many questions over whether the UK Government will be able to pass the Bill in its current format, which would be further hindered by the approach of a forthcoming UK election. It was agreed that should the Bill pass successfully, MACS would ask that a member of the EHRC attend a future meeting.

Any other business

41. There was no other business. The Convener thanked everyone for their hard work over the last few weeks.

Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 13 April at 11.00am in Victoria Quay.

MACS Secretariat
February 2010