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Re: Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan

Dear Sir

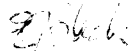
I write on behalf of the Ballymena Disability Forum and wish to make the following comments –

1. The plan should build future services on the on the knowledge of existing gaps and needs, which have been revealed from the research done in preparation for the DS RTP.
2. The plan must encompass the provision of the Transport Strategy for People with Disabilities.
3. The plan must prioritise a reasonable level of demand responsive travel services in the smaller towns and in rural areas. Your plan as outlined in 5.7.12 is totally unacceptable – to provide one journey per month. How can you justify this? Surely the very minimum should be on the lines of the Newcastle Rural Rover Service. How far will be people in the towns listed be permitted to travel? Just to the nearest shop?
4. Paragraph 6.3.9 seems to offer four return journeys per month, which may be pre-booked. You go on to say “People with a mobility impairment would also be entitled to one additional return journey per month by demand responsive, accessible door-to-door service, wherever they live.
5. Does this mean that under paragraph 5.7.12 a person will be entitled to one journey a month, but under paragraph 6.3.9 a similar person would be allowed five journeys?
6. How have you tried to estimate the take up of journeys by bus by disabled persons? I suggest that the vast majority of seriously disabled people are unlikely to tackle traveling by bus.
7. The taxi industry requires much stricter regulation. There should be a prescribed type of wheelchair accessible vehicle. The charging of an increased fare to wheelchair users or those with assistance dogs must be prohibited and should lead to withdrawal of the licence. Persons with a disability should be confident when requesting a taxi, that all taxis will be an appropriate vehicle in which they can be carried safely.
8. Very many people with major mobility difficulties will be unable to travel by bus and will always have to be reliant on travel by car. The needs of Blue

Badge Parking Permit Holders must be recognized and catered for. Many can and do use the Shopmobility schemes, but need their car to access the Shopmobility service. In Scotland and England where the Shopmobility service is being used, car parking in the nearest car park is usually free.

10. Pavements need to be kept in good repair, and a thorough review of the need for dropped kerbs implemented in all housing areas as well as in town centers to facilitate wheelchair users crossing roads and streets safely. This will enable wheelchair users to get to bus stops safely.
11. The audible signals on crossings must have regular maintenance to enable those with visual impairments cross the streets safely.

Yours faithfully



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Secretary

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