



Department for Transport

Partnerships and Ticketing ***Bus Services Bill information sheet***

There are many successful partnership arrangements across England and the new provisions in the Bill will enable them to go further.

The new Enhanced Partnership powers will enable authorities, in partnership with their local operators, to set standards for all local bus services in the area – including vehicle specifications, branding, ticketing and service frequencies.

The Bill also introduces changes to existing quality partnership schemes and multi-operator ticketing schemes.

The new partnership arrangements in the Bill aim to fix the challenges currently faced by authorities. Existing legislation provides for voluntary partnerships, which have been created in many areas across England but are not legally enforceable. Legislation also provides for Quality Partnership Schemes (QPS), which are legally enforceable, but require Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to provide new infrastructure, which is not always necessary to improve bus services in the area for passengers.

The Bill will make changes to the existing QPS legislation to make these partnerships easier to use and more attractive to local authorities. It will also introduce a new form of partnership, the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, to facilitate better joint working between local authorities and bus operators.

Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme (AQPS)

The Bill will improve the existing QPS framework by removing the requirement for LTAs to provide new infrastructure and allowing LTAs to build quality partnership schemes based on other bus-improvement measures. It will introduce new categories of service standards, including a requirement that multi-operator tickets are marketed and advertised in a clear and consistent manner by all operators in the scheme. Improving the tickets on offer to passengers will make travel faster and easier.

Enhanced Partnerships (EPs)

The Enhanced Partnership (EP) provisions would encourage partnership working to go further by allowing the LTAs to expand the areas that partnership measures can cover, specifically providing for more joined-up network planning and allowing local implementation and enforcement. The EP will allow LTAs, with the approval of the operators, to deliver some of the outcomes that are only otherwise possible under a franchising model.

Under an enhanced partnership:

- (a) The LTA, with the participation of bus operators, will produce a written “Enhanced Partnership Plan” – analysing the local bus market and covering the improvements the LTA and the operators want to make to the bus network.
- (b) The LTA, with the participation of bus operators, will also produce a written “Enhanced Partnership Scheme” – that will set standards that all operators within a geographical area would need to meet. These can include vehicle standards, ticketing arrangements and frequency and timing of services.
- (c) The LTA can proceed with the plan and the scheme only if no more than a set minority of operators object.
- (d) Before the LTA can adopt the plan and/or the scheme, it must consult on the proposals, including bus passenger representatives and the Competition and Markets Authority.
- (e) LTAs will have the option or obligation (depending on the powers the LTA gets through the EPS) to take over registration functions from the Traffic Commissioners.

Community Transport

The Bill will provide arrangements to ensure that community transport operators are not prevented from running services and are not burdened by obligations that would have this effect.

Advanced Ticketing Schemes

The objective of this policy is to ‘future proof’ the LTAs power to make multi-operator ticketing schemes, by ensuring that ticketing schemes can introduce paper tickets as well as new technologies (e.g. smart cards, contactless payment). It will also place a duty on LTAs to have regard to any ticketing, partnership or franchising scheme any other relevant LTA has (or is developing) when developing their own scheme. This is designed to benefit passengers travelling across the boundaries of different LTAs.

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