

July 2006

Mr S Hankin
Buses and Taxis (BT2)
Department for Transport
Zone 3/13
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

Geoff Pickford
Ext 7194

Dear Mr Hankin

**Rural Bus Challenge Award 1999 – Derbyshire Public Transport
Information Technology**

As you will be aware, Derbyshire County Council bid for Rural Bus Challenge funding in 1999 for public transport information technology in Derbyshire. The original intention behind this successful bid was to continue the development of a local journey planner to incorporate real time information at key bus stops along rural corridors, and via terminals sited in market towns and bus/rail interchanges.

We made a further successful bid in 2002 under the Rural Bus Challenge scheme to enhance the Transpeak bus service which ran from Manchester to Nottingham via the Peak District National Park. This scheme was delayed due to operational difficulties, but was finally introduced in 2005. It was hoped that the two schemes could still complement one another, which was discussed in a letter to your predecessor, Jens Reinke, in May 2004.

In the period since the original bid, technology has moved on rapidly such that the capability for electronic journey planning is now widespread using the Internet, and can be carried out in the home, in the office, and in libraries and Travel Information Centres, using either the County Council website, or the Government's own Transport Direct. Derbyshire libraries will soon be staying open until 9 pm, and all have internet access.

The enhancement to the Transpeak service has proved very successful, and is welcomed by both ourselves and Trentbarton, the bus operator involved.

Consequently, we feel now that, whilst the delivery mechanism has been overtaken by technology and events, the original philosophy to improve and enhance the dissemination of information to the passenger (and potential passenger) is still valid, and, due to the advances in technology, is now even more of a practical proposition.

The intended system, which has been used successfully in the south of the county in conjunction with Leicester City Council, uses mobile phone technology to link buses with stops to display the current arrival time at stops, and the next stop on board the bus. Additional information can be given using the onboard displays, such as where to alight for a particular attraction – there are several of these along the route of the Transpeak, including the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. It is our view that this technology will further

enhance the now successful Transpeak service and provide an invaluable real time information system at stops and on buses within part of the Peak District National Park for both residents and tourists in the rural areas.

Additionally, the system would allow SMS messaging enabling text information on arrival times at certain stops to be sent to a mobile phone, further widening the opportunity for reaching existing and potential passengers. The net effect of all these improvements will be to further increase passenger numbers and work towards meeting the Government target relating to increased patronage.

The 1999 Rural Bus challenge award of £155,000 would allow the system to be set up, and to provide real time information displays at 18 key bus stops along the Transpeak route within Derbyshire.

We would now like to use the grant money as indicated above, and would be able to complete the spend within this financial year. I would be grateful if you could consider this, and contact me with your decision. I am, of course, happy to discuss any details of this proposal with you further.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Pickford
Head of Integrated Transport