

Jim Davies
Public Transport Officer
Herefordshire Council
236 Plough Lane
Hereford HR4 0WZ

March 19 2009

Dear Mr Davies

LOCAL BUS SERVICE CONTRACTS

Your letter asking for consultation on bus service cuts has been brought to our attention and I am replying on behalf of the bus interest group in Rail for Herefordshire.

First and foremost we think that asking the bus service to reduce £80,000 is a poor and unfair decision. In an overall Council Budget of £360m and a Transport budget of £17m, £80,000 is very little and yet it is something that will really be noticed and really hurt Herefordshire people. It is essential to expand bus services, not reduce them. Cuts if necessary should be made elsewhere.

It is not fair that public transport should suffer at the expense of over-spending in other areas. I note that Herefordshire Council have paid £1.5 million on the Rotherwas Access Road from the Local Transport Plan budget between 2006 and 2009 plus nearly £3m borrowing. Other large schemes, such as planning for the Link Road in Edgar Street Grid also amount to over-spending. In effect these schemes draw money away from much needed public transport.

Nevertheless out of crises can come opportunity and the situation does give us a chance to re-think bus services.

Rail for Herefordshire's aims are an hourly bus service to all the market towns, from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. A reliable and regular bus service is almost a human right for those of us without cars or unable to drive which is about 50% of the population. An hourly regular bus service would also provide a viable alternative to people with cars, thereby reducing traffic congestion. Given this principle and applying it to the list of bus contracts to be affected, and if bus services have to be cut (which we strongly dispute) we suggest the following three principles:

1. Cut all the once a week services. Reason: they cannot be said to provide a regular service. Replace with a taxi dial a ride service if necessary; This means 31, 388, 405, 456, 457, 459, 472, 478, 479, 671, 676 will be cut
2. Cut the bus services within towns, in Hereford, Leominster and Bromyard. Reason: the distance can be walked or cycled. Replace with a taxi or dial a ride service for those unable to walk
3. Keep all the other services, do not reduce them. If adjustments have to be made make sure there is a minimum of a morning, to arrive at destination

before 9.00 a.m, mid day, early evening (5.30 p.m.) and late evening (11 p.m.) service. Reason: it is essential to invest in public transport to reduce traffic congestion and provide viable transport for those unable or unwilling to drive.

Expanding on these points in more detail:

Point 2:

74/74A, cut if reduction has to be made, replace with cycle lanes and service 449
76/76A, cut
400, cut
410, cut

Point 3:

Keep 32, 34, 38 buses including Sunday – Sunday is an important day for travelling.
Keep 37: add additional 5.30 p.m. and 11.00 p.m. from Ross bus and 11.00 p.m. from Hereford bus
Keep 39A; Retain but spread out these good bus service times, if reduction has to be made, so there is a later evening bus from Hay and Hereford
Keep 412: Although it is only once a day, it provides a good route for walkers, and the school. Advertise more for tourists.
Keep 417; adjust timetable to four buses but the full journey Ledbury to Worcester and at the four times stated in Point 3 above
Keep 426; adjust timetable to four buses but the full journey Leominster to Hereford and at the four times stated in Point 3 above
Keep 446: extend journey through to Kington; adjust timetable to four buses for the full journey Hereford to Kington and vice versa. Buses leaving Hereford currently are too late for anyone to do anything.
Keep 449: A good regular bus into the evening. Can take the 74/74A travellers.
Keep 461/462; Important to keep evening service, so people can go out in the evening
Keep 492, as it is or extend
Keep 672, adjust timetable to four buses as in Point 3 above for the full journey Bromyard to Ledbury and vice versa.

Yours sincerely

Nancy Morgan
Bus Representative, Rail for Herefordshire

cc

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