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June 2014

# Response to Nexus Supplemental Consultation (April 2014)

With respect to the Proposal for a Quality Contracts Scheme in  
Tyne and Wear

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# Bus Users UK's response

1. The main issue for Bus Users UK when considering any partnership proposal or assessing its implementation are the potential benefits and disadvantages to passengers.
2. We note that the revised proposals address the concerns we and others raised about the adverse effect on passengers in Gateshead. Given the requirement of Gateshead passengers to travel across the Tyne into central Newcastle we would also suggest consideration is given to giving one-zone fare entitlement to passengers, for example from Gateshead Interchange, into a suitably (and clearly) defined area of Newcastle city centre.
3. In general terms we do not have a strong view on how the contracts should be allocated, so long as they make sense for bus users and do not impact adversely on fares levels.
4. Proposals to allow vehicles up to 15 years old to run the network are not acceptable - a radical approach should result in a lower fleet age profile than that proposed. BU UK also proposes greater use of low-carbon emission vehicles than that proposed, as they will contribute to better air quality and low-carbon vehicles tend to give an improved passenger experience.
5. Wifi has the ability to give public transport an advantage over car use and greater consideration should be given to this becoming a standard feature: as should provision of audio-visual 'next stop' announcement systems.
6. On terms and conditions for drivers, remuneration levels and staff conditions that are commensurate with a professional and customer-oriented service provision are essential to secure quality of service.
7. We are concerned about the likely effects on services which are not within scope of the QCS. These are services which are likely to have greater rural elements and therefore greater fragility than services within the QCS, and may depend on funding from other local authorities such as Durham or Northumberland. It seems inevitable that some of these may have to be relocated into other premises retained or procured by their operator in the event of that operator having to vacate premises affected by contract loss,

which could well affect the viability of such services. While stability might be ensured for services within the QCS, currently stable and well-established services to outlying areas could be subject to undue instability, which is a concern to passengers.

8. Bus Users UK welcomes the proposal to establish a Public Transport Users Forum but would recommend an independent body administers it for transparency and openness. Bus Users UK would be happy to advise/assist. The concept of the Forum acting as 'an advocate for public transport within the community' is particularly welcomed.