

Consultation on changes to bus registration in Scotland



RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual / Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Transport Scotland web site)?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick **ONE** of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Transport Scotland web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Transport Scotland to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: do you agree with the proposal to extend the pre-registration notice period from 14 days to 28 days ?

Yes No

The current 14 day period can be challenging for authorities to effectively analyse registration documents within the timescale, particularly when there is a high volume of registration documents received as part of a major network revision.

To extend the notification period to 28 days would provide authorities adequate time to give full consideration to the registration documents and allow more time to analyse the changes and the impact of these in more depth.

This would also allow officers to present improved information to Councillors and Stakeholders on the changes at an earlier stage in the process, i.e. immediately following the notification period.

In addition it is often the case that problems/errors are identified during and following the 14 day period by the authority or operator which often results in the operator requesting a short notice registration amendment, to increase the notification period to 28 days, should reduce such instances by using this time to work with operators to eliminate such errors from the final registration.

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposal to replace the duty to inform the relevant authorities before making an application for registration with a duty to consult with the relevant authorities?

Yes No

We agree with this requirement to an extent, although on the whole there are generally strong levels of partnership working between Aberdeen City Council and First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird and we do usually receive notification of changes in advance of receipt of applications, there has also been a noted improvement in consultation with stakeholders and the public in advance of any major network changes being made.

We would be concerned if this requirement became too prescriptive and impacted on positive relationships which are currently in place and any guidance should be based on best practice. In addition if this is too prescriptive it may place a considerable burden on authorities and operators and require considerable staff input, which may detract from the ability to effectively analyse the registration documents in the revised timescale.

However, it is appreciated that a greater degree of dialogue and consultation with authorities would be beneficial in terms of allowing for formal feedback to be considered prior to finalisation of registration documents. This would give the authority the ability to have an explicit and formal opportunity to express their views and discuss the changes in

depth with the operator.

At present, the 14 day notification period is generally deemed to be confidential and Transport Authority officers cannot discuss the changes within this period. By having consultation this suggests that the confidential aspect would cease and proposals could be discussed with elected members and stakeholders from an earlier point in time.

However in a deregulated market it is difficult to see what benefits consultation will have as operators can ultimately implement the changes as they plan to. Although the consultation would give a more structured and formal opportunity for discussion the end outcome would not necessarily be changed from the current arrangements.

Guidance would most certainly be required as to how the consultation process would operate.

Question 3: Do you agree that relevant authorities should be encouraged through guidance to draw potential concerns about new registrations to the attention of the traffic Commissioner for Scotland and/or Transport Scotland?

Yes No

Currently authorities already have the ability to raise concerns with the Scottish Traffic Commissioner if it is considered that a registration is in breach of the legislation and/or regulations. To provide other comments on registrations to the Scottish Traffic Commissioner or Transport Scotland, such as concerns over levels of service provision or timing of services, would be of minimal benefit if the Scottish Traffic Commissioner or Transport Scotland do not have the legislative powers to address the concerns raised.

Although it could have the benefit of building a picture of service provision and gaps in the bus network across Scotland coupled with funding restrictions within Transport Authorities to fill any gaps. However, as noted as there would be no legislative powers to address these, which suggests the benefit would be negligible.

It is also a concern that if Transport Authorities take such action, this may have a detrimental impact on partnership working relationships with local bus operators.

Question 4a: Do you agree with the proposal to reduce the period of registration from 56 days to 42 days? What difficulties (if any) do you consider such a change might present and how might these be addressed?

Yes No

While we appreciate that if the 14 day notification period is extended to 28 days the desire would be not to be to extend the overall registration process and understand the reasoning not doing so, it would however, be detrimental to not keep the current period of registration.

As advised, when a large number of registration documents are received the current 14 day notification period and 56 day registration period is already challenging to authorities. Particularly, following the 14 day notification period, the 56 day registration period is

challenging in terms of the ability to effectively notify elected members, stakeholders and community groups on the impact of changes and to have sufficient time to consider if any mitigating action should be undertaken by the authority, such as implementing supported services.

This time is also used by authorities to amend/update bus service databases for the purposes of producing bus stop timetable information, real time passenger information and updating the Traveline Scotland national timetable database. It is difficult to see how this could be achieved in less time than at present.

Aberdeenshire Council in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird produce bus stop timetable information in Aberdeen City. They have advised us that any significant reduction in the time available to produce these materials would significantly undermine their ability to produce local timetable information as well as export the relevant service information to Traveline Scotland, which they also undertake on behalf of Aberdeen City Council. Particularly given many timetable changes impact on the both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire regions. It is likely that the current process could only be achieved by incurring additional staff costs, which would be difficult to undertake at the present time.

Question 4b: An alternative option would be to reduce the registration period from 56 days to 42 days only where Electronic Bus Service Registration (EBSR) is used. Do you agree with this?

Yes No

Increased use of electronic registration should be progressed, although it is appreciated that some smaller operators do not have the ability to undertake this at present.

However, as an authority, we experience a number of difficulties with the current EBSR registrations arrangements and their format and as such, do not find that time is saved compared to paper registrations.

The information is not always of a high standard, particularly the route maps, format etc. These registrations can be difficult to analyse, often have inaccuracies and we receive split registrations which increases the complexity of analysing these documents.

If considerable improvements are made to EBSR registrations then this reduction may be considered, although for reasons given above the 56 days is still a restrictive timescale to work under.

Question 5: Do you agree that we should require operators to detail within registered hourly frequency bands any services that are registered as frequent services?

Yes No

This would be welcomed as it would help meet a recommendation from the Competition Commission.

The main benefit would be to passengers by providing more accurate and detailed information. We receive a number of representations from the public confused by services which operate "at frequent intervals" and this would improve this matter.

Question 6: Do you agree that if the proposed changes set out above are adopted, they will improve the bus registration process in Scotland ?

Yes No

While there are real benefits to be gained in extending the notification period and some benefits are perceived from more formalised consultation, overall the proposals would not improve the process.

To reduce the 56 days to 42 days would be detrimental to Transport Authorities ability to process registrations, in particular in producing bus stop information, updating Traveline and the ability to respond to changes by implementing mitigating measures, such as supported bus services.

Bus services are deregulated and there are no legislative powers to be implemented as part of these proposals, which means that very little would change from the current process.

Question 7: It is possible that much of what is proposed above could be achieved through Guidance and/or a Code of Conduct to facilitate engagement between operators and relevant authorities rather than changes to the legislation. Do you have any views on this?

Yes No

In terms of the consultation process guidance would be preferable, as this would allow a degree of flexibility as to how it is actioned, but would also set a guideline framework for authorities and operators to work under without being too prescriptive and placing an onerous burden on both authorities and operators. It would allow authorities and operators to determine the process that works best for them.

Changes to the notification and registration periods should be made through regulation to ensure that they are adhered to. To only have such a change through guidance would not ensure these timescales were enforceable and they could be ignored.