

## **Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA)**

Minutes of Full Meeting held on Thursday 18 September 2008, in the Forth Valley Sensory Centre, Camelon, Falkirk, commencing at 2.15 pm, immediately following the AGM.

### **Present:**

Stan Flett (Chairperson), Maggie Killin (Vice Chairperson), Douglas Gilroy (Individual Honorary Life Member – minute taker), John Ballantine (Individual), Andrew Cowie (Lochaber Disability Access Panel), Paul Cross (Individual Member), Sheila Fletcher (CTA), Marcus Glover (Deafblind Scotland), Stephen Joyce (Deafblind Scotland), Lillian Lawson (SCoD), Jackie Maceira (West Dunbartonshire Access Panel), Pat McGuigan (Glasgow Access Panel), Ryan McQuigg (Leonard Cheshire Disability), Margaret-Mary McNulty (Quarriers), Thomas Patullo (Individual), Jim Ritchie (Individual), Kate Sanford (Quarriers), Matt Short (National Express East Coast), Caroline Tumath (Quarriers).

Observers: Chris Clark, Alec Stuart (Transport Scotland),

In attendance: Andrew Dewey, Sue Mowat (Interpreters)

### **1. Opening remarks**

Stan opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He drew attention to the fact that, due to ill health, Alan Rees the Secretary was not present and wished him a speedy recovery back to good health. Members were then asked to sign the sederunt sheet.

### **2. Apologies**

Fiona Anderson (NorthLink Ferries), Chris Crockett (Inclusion Scotland), Bob Edwards (Highland Council), Margaret Gilroy, Jan Goodall (DATAG), David Griffiths (ECAS), Mac Logan (Individual), John McDonald (CTA), Bill McIntosh (Scottish Taxi Federation), Roddy MacTaggart (Aberdeen Council), Network Rail (submitted by Pat who intimated that Network rail was interested in joining SATA), Patrick Nyamurandira (First ScotRail), Alan Rees (Secretary/Treasurer), Terry Robinson (Individual), Liz Rowlett (SDEF), Muriel Williams (Individual Honorary Life Member), Ann Young (SEAG).

### **3. Minutes**

The Minutes of previous meeting held on 15 May 2008 were approved on the motion of John Ballantine, seconded by Pat McGuigan.

### **4. Matters arising**

**(a) National Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme**

Review continuing and response made.

**(b) MACS/PTUC**

To note the successful outcome of the lobby to prevent the amalgamation of MACS with PTUC.

Now a new Convener and Members are being recruited (closing date was 5th September).

Trevor Meadows will not be applying to continue as Convener but has submitted a report on outstanding issues which Ministers should address. SATA will circulate it and needs to give its support.

**(c) Taxi booking office licensing**

The Scottish Government is about to put forward proposals.

**(d) Rail matters**

To be raised under Item 5 information exchange - Patrick Nyamurandira of FSR had submitted a report to be circulated separately.

SATA responses were made to various DfT/Transport Scotland consultations, now posted on the SATA website

**5. Information exchange**

**(a) Wheelchair seating services**

Kate Sanford drew members attention to the wheelchair seating services action plan consultation. John Ballantine, Maggie Killin and Jackie Maceira pointed out that it was proposed that SATA wheelchair users would make a response to this consultation. Kate to forward information to Alan Rees for sending on to members.

**(b) The Community Transport Association Event**

Conference and exhibition on 28th to 30th October in Manchester

**(c) Scottish Transport Awards 2008**

The award dinner and conference is on 19th November at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow

A submission for Describe on Line (Terry Robinson) to receive an award had been unsuccessful.

**(d) Holyrood Magazine conference 'Demand Responsive Transport: A Roadmap for Scotland'**

Also on 19th November

**(e) 'Mind the Gap' report by Ryan McQuigg of Leonard Cheshire Disability.**  
Details had been circulated.

**(f) Companion travel concessions**

Stephen Joyce (Deafblind Scotland), raised a question regarding companion travel concessions and the postcode lottery guidelines that Local Authorities are currently following. Douglas advised Stephen that many of the issues raised had been mentioned in SATA's response to the Scottish Executive's consultation on concessionary fares. Sheila advised that the Community Transport Association, Capability Scotland and Help the Aged are about to embark on a campaign entitled; "Fare Deal" and offered to add Stephen's points to this campaign. Chris Clark of Transport Scotland offered to refer this to their concessionary fares department and try and get someone from that Department to attend future SATA meeting and answer questions on this subject.

**(g) Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum**

Chris Clark of Transport Scotland updated members on the last Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum meeting: They were working on 5 stations at present and another 5 had been identified for step free work to commence: Easterhouse, Hyndman, Montrose, Linlithgow and Perth.  
Transport Scotland and DFT had launched the new code of practice for station design. – a copy of which would be sent to SATA.

**(h) National Express East Coast rolling stock**

Matt Short of National Express East Coast advised that they were undergoing a refurbishment of their rolling stock – HST high speed trains: 7 sets are complete and another is scheduled for the end of November. These will be to the design of the 'Mallard' trains. All power cars on the HST's are also being refurbished.  
A route manager for Scotland has just been appointed. New staff training modules were being introduced.  
In December of this year a new catering offer is being launched.

**6. Presentation by Doug Fleming of Stagecoach  
"Stagecoach East Moving Forward".**

Doug said in his presentation:

**"Overview:** In making this presentation I am aware that there may be elements of particular interest to your members. I have therefore, taken the last few years in relation to introducing new types of vehicles into the fleet, which offer assistance to people with reduced mobility. I will then explore what we have undertaken with groups in Fife, Angus & Kinross, (the areas we cover).

Stagecoach East Scotland is 3 companies: Fife; Strathtay; & Stagecoach Perth. Annual turnover is over £51 million. 544 vehicles and 1211 employees. In 2007/2008 we brought in 55 brand new low floor/easy to access vehicles to assist people with reduced mobility. Some of these are more welcome than

others: coaches are a nightmare for the Industry to comply with the new regulations. This one, Volvo B7R, which we have purchased, has resulted in going from one step on the old coach to 3 steps on this one, in order to provide a tail lift for wheelchair users. It may help wheelchair users but it doesn't help other people with reduced mobility and creates a conflict of interest.

These vehicles were all introduced on the Glasgow-Edinburgh run, following which we introduced another vehicle called a "Scania Auldie", which is a 13.5 metre long vehicle, (low floor). Timings proved that the coach would pass and if you waited 5 minutes you could get on the next vehicle which was more suitable for people with reduced mobility, rather than trying to climb the steps. What we have done with the coaches is because not everyone can get to Ferry Toll where this interchange takes place. We have established a disability help line where people can phone and book on any line in the Fife corridor. Thus we are aware that they are wishing to board a bus and can take out certain seats the previous night. This solution is not ideal, nor what disabled people want. Manufacturers are still currently looking at different designs but no one has come up with the ideal design for getting a wheelchair user onto a vehicle of a coach type. The problem with coaches is that a space is needed underneath for luggage, so you are raising the height of the chassis in order to provide that facility and therefore when you do that it causes a problem. Some design of vehicles would result in the wheelchair user sitting at one level while all other passengers were sitting at another level.

With the introduction of low floor vehicles through the Government's Bus Route Development Grant over a 3 year process, new routes were introduced using low floor vehicles and Councils introduced street furniture, (Castle Kerbing, new bus stops etc), from which a partnership was formed to assist all passengers. By this money over a 3 year period it was hoped to generate new passengers on these routes in Fife making the connection: 37, 39, 78, Taylink 99. On the 747 2 years ago there were 600 people a month being carried whereas there are now 12,000 using the service. Perth has also introduced it at Muirton for low floor vehicles and Strathtay has introduced the 13 service Monifeath-ninewells hospital, the 27 Kirriemuir-Arbroath and each and every one has shown different degrees of success. There has never been a failure to date, with any of the assisted services. All publicity material gives information on the help line for disabled people

Further investments include e.g. the gold line in Perth – what is termed the BMW range: leather seats, air conditioning etc. which increased usage by 5% per year. When introduced in Basingstoke, England there was a 14% immediate increase in patronage. I don't know if we will have the same success with the hovercraft. Or if any of you took advantage of it, when on the Fife-Leith run. It blew our minds the number of people wishing to use it during that fortnight. At the same time, there wasn't a disabled person able to use it because it had never been designed for disabled people to use it. During the fortnight we had it, our engineers worked with Fife Independent Disability Centre, to create a step, a

ramp and a lift to assist disabled people to board and I think that this is now working with the hovercraft down south. So we are willing and keen.

**On partnerships:** Fife Independent Disability Network were invited to the Company to show their side of things trying to get on a bus. From that we developed a training programme with them being actually involved in the delivery, which puts a totally different perspective on matters. A suggestion relating to hard of hearing passengers, came up with the idea of having a sign with the ear symbol on the dashboard – to which the passenger could point and then the driver knew to face the person in order to allow them to lip read what was being said. A small inexpensive solution but to hearing impaired people - one which makes a big difference to them. Another company we are working with to produce a training programme is First Scotland (Fife based).

**Marketing & Publicity:** This explains what can and can't be done and where they can get information. There is a big move away from the wheelchair to the scooter. The scooter has created problems in its own right – the legislation has defined the sizes of vehicles to allow for a wheelchair and it is a very basic wheelchair. Not like what many of the modern wheelchairs currently are – large, heavy and robust and space does not allow them to get in. We can take up to a maximum of 1000mm by 600 mm, as that is what manufacturers have designed and produced vehicles to. Another leaflet is 'How to catch the bus' aimed at people with learning disabilities.

**Assistance:** When wheelchair users are requesting assistance, because of the variance in sizes, what we will do is collect and bring the user down to our nearest depot and establish in the first instance, whether the wheelchair and user can be boarded. Additionally, bus stations are fitted with minicom loop hearing systems. We have large print, Braille and audio tape versions of timetables. However these are not produced en mass but on request.

**Future:** continue to invest in vehicles, continue to search for the right fully accessible coach. We are also about to go into partnership with the RNID to see what we can do to assist disabled passengers. That's where we are and I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you".

In the ensuing question and answer session, the following were asked:

Q1: I know wheelchair users have to board backwards. Is there any possibility of ramps whereby people with walking disabilities may progress on to the bus?

A: We see the service type low floor vehicle which goes flush with the pavement, as the ideal position but as I indicated, in coaches we are going from one step to three. At the moment the industry is trying various ways of trying to come up with an answer.

Q2: If we could marry coaches to low floor buses, is there a possibility of putting coach seating into these buses?

A: I referred earlier to the 13.5 metre long Scannia's introduced into Fife: they are on trial and are the first ones introduced into Scotland and these vehicles have air conditioning, leather seats and y-if fitted to them. They are the top of the range vehicles but the only thing we can't provide is facilities for people with large amounts of luggage.

Q3: One of the problems disabled people experience when coaches are being used on service work, is that there is no way of alerting the driver when they want to disembark. Can a bell be fitted?

A: That's is not too difficult to do something about. However, in reality every Tom, Dick and Harry would be pressing it.

Q4: How can communication issues for deafblind people be improved?

A: Once all the new technology has been introduced throughout Scotland many of the issues you raised can be addressed. Pilot schemes on information provision are currently being run e.g. Dundee, which is ongoing. But until everyone is comfortable and happy with these, I don't see them being rolled out for some time.

Stan Flett then thanked Doug Fleming for his presentation.

**7. Date of next meeting:** 13 November 2008 in Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, Brook Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow, commencing at 1.30 pm.

**8. Close:** there being no other business the meeting was closed at 3.30 pm.