

Agenda Item 6 – Public Questions – Citybus & Stagecoach

QUESTION 1

There are three questions I would like to ask Plymouth Citybus and Stagecoach:

1. Can you make sure that any cancelled services are marked as “CANCELLED” on the overhead electronic timetables in Saltash and Royal Parade?

1A. Plymouth Citybus answered that due to the electronic timetable software requiring human intervention to update real time incidents of delays and cancellations, there will always be a chance for the electronic timetable at specific locations to experience delays in receiving and displaying real time information.

The Plymouth Citybus mobile application provides precise information as it has a live countdown and bus tracking facility to show users where a bus is located and when it is expected to arrive. The mobile application is the most reliable source of information on services.

2. Can you make sure that the timetables at other bus stops are up-to-date and show details for the particular bus stop where they are displayed?

2A. Plymouth City Bus was happy to announce a newly revamped timetable with clear, easy to read information is due to be distributed in the coming weeks.

3. Currently Plymouth Citybus have 4 services which run from Fore Street and then along Callington Road but only one service that runs from Fore Street and then along St. Stephens Road. Would it be possible to change one of the Callington Road services so that it takes the same route as the 5A from Fore Street, running along St. Stephens Road first before it then meets up with Callington Road? The St. Stephens area would then gain from an extra service.

3A. Plymouth City Bus thanked the resident for the suggestion and stated they would further consider the proposal and give due consideration to the suggestion of a rerouted service.

QUESTION 2

I would like to request Citybus that the number 71 service that stops at the top of Fore Street, Saltash at 8.24am, to have an earlier arrival time of around 8.15am?

The current 8.24am has not been arriving on time for quite a long period (I am aware that the bridge works was the cause of a lot of delays prior, but the bridge is now clear of any works, so the roads are now clear). Yet, the bus is still late every morning.

Yesterday it was 10 mins (Tuesday 2nd Nov), and today it was 6 mins late. This impacts upon four local school girls who rely on this service to reach Notre Dame School in Looseleigh Lane, on time. They are often late and as parents, we have to phone their lateness in.

This has an effect on their well-being as they hate being late. Notre Dame School have themselves emailed Citybus, about the bus times. I have emailed the customer service team of Citybus myself to request that an earlier time would support their travel. Any users of the service that have appointments at Derriford Hospital for a time of 9am are also going to find themselves stuck to make the appointment times.

*A. Plymouth City Bus sympathised with the users experiencing delays which has an impact on their well-being and assured the resident that travel to education and health appointments is important to Plymouth City Bus. Due to the service being recently launched in 2020, Plymouth City Bus did not have visibility of the operational performance. Plymouth City Bus will further investigate the route between Trulefoot and **Derriford?** with a view to work alongside Cornwall Council to provide the right service for all users.*

Plymouth City Bus thanked the resident for the feedback provided and assured them they would see what could be done to assist in delays being experienced with the Town Council to be informed of any outcome to their findings.

QUESTION 3

I understand that representatives from Stagecoach and Citybus are facing questions from the public about their services. Our only service in Botus Fleming is the Citybus no.12/12A I have serious concerns and my questions are these.

1. As services are stretched from all corners it seems that bus operators are in no better position. With competition on the rise from companies who operate lorry haulage services, the real issue you need to address is recruitment and retention. Pay, T&C's must surely come into it? How do you plan to address these issues? H&S issues must be a priority not only to your staff but the travelling public too.

2. Do you agree that satisfying your share-holders, means by design, whether intentional or not punishes communities, in particular rural areas, where elderly and vulnerable people have no alternative transport available? Even car owners may no longer be able to drive due to a medical condition and that has no age qualification/boundary!

3. In England in 1985 bus services were privatised/deregulated on the supposition that this would open up competition with cheaper fares, better services etc.. Do you agree that now is the time to rethink the whole transport policy by putting bus services back into public ownership, run by the public, who will provide a replacement bus at the time of need instead of leaving passengers stranded?

A. Plymouth City Bus answered the residents first point that pay rises were implemented to ensure recruitment retention and further discussions for additional pay is due to be held prior to April 2022. Plymouth City Bus believe employees want more than just money and wish to feel valued in their positions hence why Plymouth City Bus put employees at the centre of everything they do. When Covid struck shares were suspended until Service providers work back to some form of financial stability.

Transport for Cornwall is a great example of private ownership and private sector making a little go a long way with Cornwall Council putting in a million extra bus miles by taking commercial routes and integrating school movements. This has produced many more services for the same amount of money.

Plymouth City Bus believes they have good policies in place and welcomed convictions from politicians which leads to working collaboratively to achieve more. Plymouth City Bus pointed to the National Bus Strategy which has been found from such collaborations. With the biggest challenge services providers are to face is to continue operations whilst producing zero emissions striving to continue to be in a position to offer good quality services at good value.

Stagecoach spoke of the improvements made to the wage rate of employees and their Terms and Conditions. The positive effect this made is evident in 20 employees returning to the company once the wage rate was addressed. Stagecoach reiterated that their shareholder's dividends were suspended also.

QUESTION 4

Please could Stagecoach explain why the 2A service has been so poor over the past months? Here are some examples:

1. The service has been most irregular. The indicator at the co-op bus stop seems more for discussion than accuracy. Although 2A's have been indicated many simply do not turn up.
2. Although the company may have problems over driver availability and numbers this does not seem to have affected other bus companies or the 2 service. I have seen 2 or even 3 2's come through while waiting for the 2A.
3. I had to get off a scheduled 2A marked Latchbrook when the service terminated – according to the timetable at Frifth Road. My money was taken, I requested the Latchbrook destination but you did not fulfil your obligation in reasonable time because of a lack of 2A's I had to complete my journey on foot.
4. On another occasion when coming back from Plymouth 2 X 2A's never turned up despite being indicated. What is the purpose of an indicator if it is not accurate? Again several 2's turned up as scheduled. I have even wondered whether your company has got something against those living in Burraton or Latchbrook.

When a 2A did arrive it broke down in Alma Road. We were transferred to, of course, a 2 – which was on time – and another long wait for a 2A outside the co-op.

If it was not so serious it could be humorous – but with winter here it could be disastrous to the elderly.

5. So much for the timetable service. Your customer service is just as bad. At least 25 people have complained to me about the 2A service. I promised to try to help and telephoned your company. Just like your bus drivers your telephonists are excellent. They listened to me and promised to pass on my problem to appropriate management. I have never had the courtesy of a response; Stagecoach does need to improve.

A. Stagecoach understood the resident's frustration with services now improving with the wish to get it back to full frequency as soon as possible. Stagecoach agreed that a lower scheduled service should have been more organised and hopes this will now improve due to services returning to better frequencies.

Stagecoach apologised for the customer service levels element of the resident's question. Stagecoach explained a restructure had taken place with understandable teething problems which have been addressed and Stagecoach promised to be doing their best to provide a better service going forward.

END OF PUBLIC QUESTIONS