



Item 11 – A30 Bus Lane Casualties and Congestion – Addendum 2

Letter from Andrew Dyer – Managing Director, Stagecoach South

I understand that Council members will soon be debating the future of the A30 bus lane and I would like to ask them to consider Stagecoach's viewpoint during their deliberations.

Stagecoach strongly supports the bus lane as we believe it is a vital part of a package of measures which has enabled us both to increase passenger numbers and improve service punctuality, with the consequent congestion and environmental benefits that these bring.

When Surrey and Hampshire County Councils invested in the A30 bus lane, we were able to match investment by introducing new vehicles and improved service frequencies and marketing. We upgraded buses on Route 1 between Camberley, Frimley, Farnborough and Aldershot in both 2004 and 2009; the latest upgrade being the introduction of "Stagecoach Gold" buses which feature high specification exteriors and interiors including leather seating. These new fleets represented investments of £1.1 million and £1.5 million respectively. As a consequence of the bus lane, buses were able to travel along the route more quickly and we were able to increase the frequency of service.

A further £250,000 investment in 2011 now means that the latest Route 1 service now runs every 7 to 8 minutes during peak hours compared to every 15 minutes prior to the bus lane. It is now one of the most frequent bus services in Surrey.

This positive operating environment I am sure also assisted with our successful bid for Government "Kickstart" funding which enabled us to invest in a new low floor easy-access fleet and a much improved timetable on Route 3 between Aldershot, Frimley, Camberley, The Meadows and Yateley in 2006.

Since the introduction of the bus lane in 2004, the patronage on these two main routes using the bus lane has increased very significantly. Whilst the introduction of free concessionary fares in April 2006 would have increased

TABLED ITEM 11
additional information

passenger numbers anyway, patronage has continued to rise after this thanks to the package of measures introduced. Passenger numbers on Route 1 have increased by 35% between June 2006 and June 2011 (i.e. after the Concessionary introduction) and on Route 3 for the same period the increase is 27%, increases which would make many places in the UK very jealous! As a result this level of patronage enables us to run the services at a profit without the need for the County Council to provide a subsidy to us except for a limited amount of assistance with the evening/Sunday service on Route 3. We do not believe that these improvements to service and usage would have been achieved without the package of measures including the A30 bus lane.

The very beneficial effects of these measures are a prime example of what can be achieved by bus operators and local authorities working in partnership.

We would strongly urge the Council to retain the bus lane and whilst for ease of understanding by motorists a 24 hr scheme is probably the best, a 12 hours scheme from 7am to 7pm each day would still provide the vast majority of congestion relief that we need. We would not support a peak hour only scheme as we believe it causes too much public confusion and we would strongly object to removal of the bus lane.

If you would like any further information I would be happy to help.

Regards

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