

# Northern Corridor; Urban Bus Challenge Consultation Results



May 2007

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The Department for Transport recently awarded Plymouth City Council with an Urban Bus Challenge Grant to support a project to increase accessibility to employment and health facilities along the Northern Corridor. Additional funding has also been secured through local development contributions.

A data collection survey was undertaken to inform the tender document and help tailor the proposed Northern Connect Bus Service to meet the needs of employers situated to the north of the city. The information collected from employers included, employee demographics, the number of people they employed, and their hours of business and the number of days their business operated. Employers were also asked what they felt were the main challenges faced by their employees when accessing their employment site. 152 surveys were sent out to employers, 147 of which were eligible survey forms used to calculate the response rate. With 51 complete survey responses this produced a very successful response rate of 34.7%.

Of the businesses that responded to the data collection survey, 27 were selected to participate in an in-depth consultation session to further explore some of the issues that were raised through the survey. The businesses that were selected represented a range of business characteristics, with 8 of them having a current Travel Plan in place.

The first consultation meeting consisted of all the businesses that do not have a Travel Plan in place. Of the 17 who were invited, 6 accepted, however only 3 attended on the day. The second meeting that took place served two purposes; firstly, it was an opportunity to kick-start the Travel Plan Forum for the Northern Corridor and secondly, to consult on the results of the data collection survey with businesses who have a Travel Plan in place. 7 out of the 10 businesses attended this meeting. Both meetings were very successful in terms of the amount and level of information attained.

Section 1 of this report presents the results of the Data Collection Survey with Section 2 summarising the findings from the consultation meetings described above.

## **Section 1 – Data Collection Survey**

### **1. Employee Demographics**

The number of employees working for the business were categorised into 3 bands; results show that the majority of employers (76.5%; 39) who responded had 50 or less employees. Four businesses that responded indicated that they had over 251 employees (see Table 1); these included Fine Tubes Ltd, The Barden Corporation and Wrigley's on Estover Industrial Estate and Marjons on Derriford Road.

**Table 1**

<b>Total Number of Employees</b>			
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
50 or Less	39	76.5	76.5
51 - 250	8	15.7	92.2
Over 251	4	7.8	100.0
Total	51	100.0	

Table 2 shows how many businesses are located in the same location or Industrial Estate. This information will be used to help determine the priority locations for bus service provision. A number of businesses have been identified as being within reasonable walking distance of the proposed interchanges or well served by existing bus services. It is unlikely that the new bus service will be able to accommodate these businesses, as the priority is to meet the needs of the more remote businesses with fewer or no bus services.

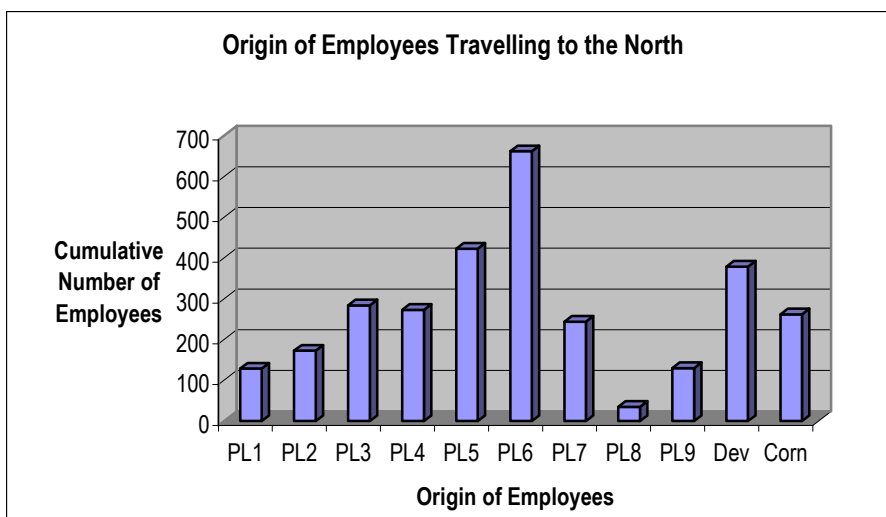
Responses from businesses on Estover Industrial Estate and Tamar Science Park made up over 50% of the total responses received (21.6%; 11 & 29.4%; 15 respectively). Three of the businesses located on Estover Industrial Estate had over 251 employees, making this one of the priority locations for bus service provision.

**Table 2**

Employment Site			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Allocated	5	9.8	9.8
Broadley Park Ind Est	2	3.9	13.7
Belliver Ind Est	4	7.8	21.6
Darklake View	6	11.8	33.3
Estover Ind Est	11	21.6	54.9
Tamar Science Park	15	29.4	84.3
Derriford Business Park	5	9.8	94.1
Plymouth Airport	1	2.0	96.1
Bickleigh Down Business Park	1	2.0	98.0
Forrester Business Park	1	2.0	100.0
Total	51	100.0	

Employers were asked whether any of their employees are registered as disabled as this may influence the type of bus service provision. Six businesses indicated that they had employees who were registered disabled, 2 of which are situated on Estover Industrial Estate and 2 on Tamar Science Park. The last question in this section aimed to identify as far as possible where employees lived and therefore where their journey to work starts. This information will ensure that the bus service ‘fits’ with the existing services serving Derriford and the George Junction Park & Ride Interchange. Results show that that majority of employees of the businesses that responded are from the local PL6 area (approx. 662). A high number of employees also appear to start their journey to work from the PL5 area (approx. 423). Very few employees appear to be commuting long distances from the PL1, PL2, PL8 and PL9 areas. However, other Devon postcodes yielded a high number (approx. 379) indicating that many employees are travelling in from the north of the Plymouth boundary. This is a positive result as a bus service running from the Park and Ride Interchange has the potential of capturing many of these commuters. There also appears to be a high number of employees travelling over from Cornwall (approx. 262) (see Table 3).

**Chart 1**



## 2. Hours of Business

The first question in this section is complex with respect to analysing the responses. Employers were asked to provide information about their hours of business including all their shift patterns and how many employees are on the premises at these times. This information will ensure that the bus service is meeting the needs of as many employees as possible at the right times of the day.

A brief look at the responses to this question shows that the most popular start and finish times include:

Start	Finish
– 6.00am	– 4.00pm
– 7.00am	– 4.30pm
– 7.30am	– 5.00pm
– 8.00am	– 5.30pm
– 8.30am	– 6.00pm
– 9.00am	

The table below shows a more in depth view of the start and finish times of the businesses who responded and also the number of employees who start and finish at the same time at the same location.

**Table 3**

Employment Site	Start Time	Total Number of Employees at Start	Finish Time	Total Number of Employees at Finish
<b>Broadley Park &amp; Belliver Ind Est.</b>	6.00am	10	6.00pm	10
	6.00pm	10	6.00am	10
	7.30am	13	4.00pm	13
	8.00am	7	5.00pm	37
	8.30am	30		
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>		<b>70</b>
<b>Darklake View</b>	6.30am	2	1.00pm	2
	7.00am	6	4.30pm	84
	7.30am	22	5.00pm	49
	8.00am	24	5.30pm	1
	8.30am	21	6.00pm	5
	9.00am	6		
	9.30am	60		
<b>Total</b>		<b>141</b>		<b>141</b>
<b>Tamar Science Park</b>	7.30am	1	2.00pm	2
	8.00am	81	3.00pm	1
	8.30am	182	4.00pm	102
	9.00am	247	4.15pm	1
	9.15am	1	4.30pm	8
	9.30am	2	4.45pm	1
	10.00am	3	5.00pm	93
			5.30pm	243
			6.00pm	62
			6.30pm	2
			8.00pm	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>517</b>		<b>517</b>

<b>Estover Ind Est.</b> (Inc. Bush Park, Pheonix Ind. Est., Plymouth Airport, Forrester Business Park)	5.00am	4	5.00am	6
	6.00am	196	6.00am	176
	6.30am	1	7.00am	123
	7.00am	151	7.30am	51
	7.45am	142	10.00am	20
	8.00am	124	1.00pm	4
	8.15am	100	2.00pm	196
	8.30am	56	2.30pm	1
	9.00am	7	3.00pm	120
	9.30am	1	3.30pm	1
	10.00am	20	4.00pm	13
	12.30pm	1	4.30pm	172
	2.00pm	196	4.45pm	151
	3.00pm	100	5.00pm	30
	7.00pm	23	5.30pm	2
	9.00pm	6	6.00pm	70
	9.15pm	51	7.00pm	23
	10.00pm	176	10.00pm	196
11.00pm	100	11.00pm	100	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1455</b>		<b>1455</b>
<b>Derriford Business Park</b>	7.00am	86	7.30am	12
	7.30am	410	3.00pm	96
	8.00am	82	4.00pm	70
	9.00am	18	5.00pm	18
	1.30pm	55	6.00pm	412
	3.00pm	4	9.30pm	55
	8.30pm	10	10.00pm	4
	10.00pm	2		
<b>Total</b>		<b>667</b>		<b>667</b>
<b>Bickleigh Down Business Park</b>	7.00am	1	4.00pm	1
	7.15am	2	4.15pm	2
	8.00am	4	5.00pm	4
	9.00am	2	6.00pm	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>		<b>9</b>

The next question in this section asked employers to tell us which days of the week their business operated. Out of the 50 who responded the majority (70.6%; 36) worked Monday to Friday only, with a further 4 working Monday to Saturday and a further 10 indicating that they operated 7 days a week. Therefore, 14 out of 50 employers said that their business operated on a Saturday and/or Sunday. Furthermore, 2 out of these 14 employers operate 7 days a week and employ over 251 people (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

Ref.	Monday - Saturday	Employees	Ref.	Monday - Sunday	Employees
12	Biovault Ltd	< 50	29	AA Sheds	< 50
31	Moorroom Ltd	< 50	36	Derwent Flooring Ltd	< 50
35	South West Shopfitters UK Ltd	< 50	37	Abbeyfield Tamar House	< 50
40	Newey & Eyre	< 50	46	Barden Corporation	251+
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Monday - Sunday</b>	<b>Employees</b>	47	B&Q Warehouse	51 – 250
3	Boots	51 - 250	48	Nuffield	51 – 250
8	Fine Tubes	251+	49	Burts Potato Chips Ltd	< 50

This information will inform the days on which the bus service will operate and the likely demand there will be for the service. This is also the case for finding out about likely demand on Bank Holidays. The results show that 8 out of the 51 employers who responded operate on one or more Bank Holiday. These are predominantly those holidays other than Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New years Day. However, 2 businesses operate on Christmas Day, 4 on Boxing Day and 4 on New Years Day.

### 3. Comments

The final question asked employers to consider what their main challenges were for accessing the employment site. The comments below represent a variety of opinion and a range of issues.

“Public Transport from home is perceived as unreliable and time-consuming. Car travel is considered the most viable form of transport due to requirement to travel between sites, flexible hours, family/personal commitments”.

“We have a 'green policy' and so we discourage car use, however the alternatives are limited for staff, e.g. PT is quite limited especially for those who drop off children on the way to work or training. We provide training to staff who have to travel here - not usual work base and unfamiliar”.

“Many potential employees are put off due to the infrequent bus times and the fact that the only a very limited number of buses actually come into Estover Ind. Est. Most colleagues who catch the bus have to walk a mile from the bus stop at ASDA. One person has been attacked whilst walking from ASDA to work”.

“Buses from Stoke are limited and don't arrive in time to start work at 9am. Limited bus service after 5.30 as well”.

“Lack of bus services to Tamar Science Park for those travelling by bus/train from Exeter / Newton Abbot. Frequency of buses from Peverell to TSP and Derriford is poor”.

“Bus links from Cornwall early morning needed”.

“Timely and efficient transportation to enable our employees to arrive at work and return home efficiently is needed - lack of a direct service to the location so people have to travel via the city centre for walk from Derriford hospital (long walk)”.

“Regular Transport is needed- situated in Brest Rd, Derriford. A lot of the care staff are young women who don't want to walk long distances to bus stops or wait at stops for long periods of time”.

“The bus service is poor for shift work. The current service does not enable people to get in ready for 6am”.

## **Section 2 – Consultation Meetings**

The following constitute the key outcomes from the two consultation meetings which were held to expand on some of the issues raised within the results of the data collection survey.

### 1. Demand for the *Northern Connect* bus service

There was strong support for the proposed bus service with many companies pledging to 'support' the service either financially, through amending their working hours to accommodate the bus timetable or through publicity of the service.

### 2. Hours of operation;

Businesses generally agreed that the core hours of operation for the service were in the morning (06:00- 09:30) and evening (17:00- 19:00) peak. In addition there was strong support for the service to operate through out the day even if this service is at a lower frequency than during the peak hours. It was felt that the service should be tailored to meet the needs of full time employees and that Monday- Friday were the key days of operation.

### 3. Frequency of the service;

There was general agreement that the frequency needs to be high in order to entice people out of their cars onto the bus and increase the attractiveness, and therefore use, of the service. It was also agreed that the service needs to 'fit' with existing service provision to interchanges; long waiting times would reduce the appeal of the service.

### 4. Ticketing

To increase the use of the service it needs to be (1) low cost, (2) allow seamless travel between the feeder services and the *Northern Connect* i.e. through tickets (3) accept Green Travel Passes because major employers on the Northern Corridor are part of the Green Travel Pass scheme.

### 5. Interchanges

The George Junction Public Transport interchange and Derriford Hospital are good interchange points for the service. Some businesses expressed support for a third interchange at ASDA being incorporated into the route of the bus service.

### 6. Who the service should be available for

All groups consulted wanted to ensure the long term viability of the service and therefore, generally, there was support for allowing the general public to use the bus, rather than the service being exclusively available for the employees of companies on the Northern Corridor, so long as opening up the service to the public did not increase the journey times of the bus as this would decrease the attractiveness of the service to employees.

### 7. Promotion

The Public Transport provision to the proposed interchanges is good. However, there was a general lack of awareness about buses operating along the Northern corridor. Promoting the services that connect with the proposed service will be a crucial part of the project as well as publicising the *Northern Connect* service.