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12th March 2008

Cllr Roger Jones
Chairman, GMPTA
Box 532, Town Hall,
Manchester, M60 2LA

Dear Cllr. Jones,

Thank you for your lengthy letter dated 18th February which is appreciated, in reply to mine of 6th February regarding the abolition of the LTPF's in their previous form. As you say the forums are now in fact Operators' Surgeries in which the public ask such questions as *Why did the 0823 not run yesterday?* Regional Seminars are by their very name not local to each borough but relate to the whole Greater Manchester Region. As such, of course, the PTA/E can control them so much more easily with presentations which take most of the time and naturally guide questioners to the topic presented.

For example, at the recent Railway Seminar at Manchester Town Hall, a large number of people came to learn and ask questions. You tried to be fair by limiting them to one per person but came down hard on anyone who tried to elaborate or query the statements made, answers given or suggest ideas. There was no consultation in the normal sense of the word. Take, for instance the Arriva Cross Country presentation telling us that under the new contract (erroneously called a franchise) we were to have 35% more seats and faster services. When someone queried the abolition of Stockport and Macclesfield stops it was quickly brushed aside. The questioner could not pursue his point. Did the PTA/E strongly object to the abolition of Stockport on these services? Will they insist on a minimum of an hourly local service to cater for Stockport passengers, including Sundays, enabling them to connect with their Cross Country service at Stoke on Trent? In fact the proposed connections are diabolical. No mention was made of the fact that the 35% extra seats jammed in were only obtained by removing the popular table seats, closing the shop and removal of some of the toilets. Nor was mention made of the reduction in trains to the South Coast and beyond Bristol to South Wales and the West Country. Hardly progress you must agree. We realise all the above is the direct result of government directives through the DfT but again this was not mentioned.

I was told off by Mrs Denise Lennox of the PTE when I dared to ask at TWO separate LTPF's why we in the Manchester area were not getting any of the trains being made surplus by First Trans Pennine on the latter's receipt of 51 brand new trains. I was informed the PTE were "in

negotiations” yet here we are three years after we knew the trains would be available and not one has come to the Manchester area. They have gone all over the country except Manchester. Some of our local services are now dangerously overcrowded. Passengers often cannot squeeze on and are left to wait for the next train, yet for every cast-off train we receive from elsewhere we have to send one to another operator. Heaven help us if one of the local ‘Pacers’ has a crash whilst overcrowded. As they are basically bus bodies the slaughter would be appalling. It is interesting that your press release in the papers for 14th February saying how many extra carriages we will be receiving, is clearly based on a paper distributed by the DfT. The railway press have gone to town showing how fictitious the figures of extra carriages are; about the only definite fact is that the 106 extra carriages you quote for the West Coast Main Line (including Manchester to London services) have been cancelled by the government.

I notice you have ignored the scurrilous figures given for attendances at LTPF meetings by deleting members of groups and associations from the numbers of the public attending and thus pretending that public attendances were very low. The words you use of *communication* and *engage* in future presumably mean you will tell us what you are going to do rather than consult. Bus Users UK and Passenger Focus have been conspicuous by their absence at LTPF meetings so are hardly likely to object to the new set up.

So where is the genuine consultation? At Stockport station at 7am in the morning! Where is the consultation on say the facilities for new Metrolink stations; what sort of ticket machines will we have? What consultation is there for the PTE policy of removing most bus services from Central Manchester under the Regional Centre proposed strategy? Why were the views of the public totally ignored when Cross Street was closed to buses (except the Shuttle) after the morning peak in spite of over 1000 objections?

What is really required are sessions at which the operators come to public meetings prepared to answer questions on their plans and policies for the present and future with the PTE showing how they fit in with their plans where necessary.

Finally you will be pleased to know that we do indeed advertise all the known future dates for operators’ surgeries and so-called Regional Seminars on the Diary page of our website.

<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/gmtransportcampaign/page7.html>

I notice a copy of your letter has been sent to all PTA members so I should be grateful if a copy of this reply is also sent to the members of the PTA.

Yours sincerely,

TONY FAWTHROP Chairman