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20<sup>th</sup> August 2012

Dear Sir

### **Changes to Bus Routes and Times in South East Northumberland – Integrated Transport**

SEN RUG notes Arriva are introducing changes to various bus routes and times in South East Northumberland from September 2012.

SEN RUG is however concerned that Arriva has not addressed the issue of integrated transport, in particular bus access to Morpeth Rail Station which is some distance from the town centre and bus station, and for many Northumberland residents requires a change of buses at the bus station, and then a walk from the nearest bus stop, despite there being an unused bus turning circle in Coopies Lane outside Morpeth Rail Station entrance.

SEN RUG draws to your attention that Morpeth now has 14 inter city rail services per day (15 on Fridays), of which 6 are operated by Arriva CrossCountry. Yet access to the rail station by public transport is currently virtually impossible, particularly for those with disabilities, luggage or with children. SEN RUG understands the County Council shortly intends to yellow line Coopies Lane which will place further pressure on the need for bus services to the rail station.

In the past, SEN RUG has received presentations from other operating divisions within the Arriva group in which we have been told that the board of Arriva is fully committed to integrated transport. SEN RUG invites you to confirm this statement is true, and if so, SEN RUG would like to propose the following changes, mostly minor in nature, to achieve this objective.

#### **1. Route 14: Thropton and Rothbury to Morpeth**

This route should be extended beyond Morpeth Bus station to Morpeth Rail Station (Coopies Lane bus turning circle). This would give access to the rail station for residents of Thropton, Rothbury, Longframlington & Longhorsley, and from the entrance of the Lancaster Park estate in Morpeth.

## **2. Route 35: Newbiggin, Ashington and Pegswood to Morpeth**

This route should be extended beyond Morpeth bus station to Morpeth Rail Station. (Coopies Lane bus turning circle). This would give access to the rail station from Newbiggin (including The Sandy Bay Holiday Park), Ashington and Pegswood.

## **3. Route 33 & Route 38: Town Services**

These routes should be linked together to provide a through service from Northgate Hospital / Lancaster Park to Stobhill, and additionally diverted at Shields Road to serve Coopies Lane bus turning circle at Morpeth Rail Station. This would enable access to the rail station from both Lancaster Park and the Stobhill Estates. Linking the routes together appears easily achievable in the light of the fact Route 33 (Lancaster Park) arrives at the bus station 4 minutes before route 38 (Stobhill) departs. Why make customers change buses?

## **4. Route 2: Blyth and Bedlington to Morpeth and Kirkhill Estate.**

This route should be diverted at Shields Road to serve Coopies Lane bus turning circle at Morpeth Rail Station. This would enable access to the rail station from both Bedlington and Guide Post as well as from the Kirkhill Estate.

## **5. Route 44A: Morpeth, Stannington, Dinnington to Newcastle**

This route should be diverted at Shields Road to serve Coopies Lane bus turning circle at Morpeth Rail Station, and also diverted at Dinnington to additionally serve Newcastle Airport (and possibly Kingston Park Shopping Centre as well), thus providing an hourly service Monday to Saturday from Morpeth to the Airport with interchange at Morpeth bus station from other Arriva Northumberland routes. The current route from South East Northumberland to the Airport involves changing from bus to Metro at Regent Centre and is difficult for those with luggage. Customers from villages such as Stannington, Blagdon and Dinnington would benefit from rail connections at either the Morpeth end or the metro station at the airport.

As some of the above referenced routes are part sponsored by Northumberland County Council, we are additionally copying this letter to them. SENRUG also made exactly the same input to the Council's Draft Public Transport Strategy Document earlier this year. SENRUG understands this is the first time the Council has created a joint strategy for both bus and train, and we very much welcome this move towards full integration of its public transport aspirations.

Finally, I enclose a couple of complimentary copies of SENRUG's Newsletter No 17. Pages 2 & 3 deal with the theme of integrated transport with the articles on page 3 setting out how it could work for Morpeth. The above proposals are included within this article. SENRUG received very positive feedback to our suggestions.

SENRUG believes that making public transport easier by fully integrating interchanges increases the number of people travelling by public transport to the benefit of **all** operators as it increases the overall total number of passengers able to use public transport.

I hope you will give these proposals serious consideration and I look forward to hearing your response.

Kindest regards

**Dennis Fancett**

Chair – SENRUG: The South East Northumberland Rail User Group

cc Mike Scott. Head of Sustainable Transport. Northumberland County Council