



“SUMMER BUS STORM” PREDICTED

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 AM TUESDAY 6TH JULY 2010

A press release by West Midlands Campaign for Better Transport

PASSENGERS across South and West Birmingham face major changes to their bus services on the 25th July. The changes are being sold by Centro and National Express West Midlands as a package of improvements to the network, however the public transport lobby group West Midlands Campaign for Better Transport believes the plans mean many passengers will see a poorer service.

The group has also criticised the decision to implement the plans only weeks after a previous set of changes to the bus network around the site of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and at a time when many regular bus users such as hospital workers, school pupils and students will be on holiday.

The changes see the axing of the busy 21 service which links Weoley Castle, Bangham Pit, the Q.E. site and the city centre and its replacement with an extended 448 service from West Bromwich. The withdrawal of the 21 will mean a reduction of service for passengers travelling to the Q.E. site from Weoley Castle; currently there is a frequency of three 21 journeys an hour during the daytime but the proposed 448 service will only be half hourly. The plans also break links for passengers between Harborne and Selly Oak.

NXWM have also decided to halve the frequency of the 84 service. However, some new limited stop services will be introduced and the frequency of services along the Bristol Road will be increased.

Kevin Chapman, the chair of West Midlands Campaign for Better Transport, said the plans would cause chaos. He commented that **“Passengers across South Birmingham have seen their bus services change twice or even three times in the space of twelve months. The whole Network Review process was supposed to result in a ‘stable’ network, however services have changed constantly and there are likely to be further ones when the Selly Oak relief road scheme is completed. It’s time that the game of musical chairs with the bus network, played on the users, was stopped”**.

He added that National Express West Midlands were wrong to cut route 21. **“The city of Birmingham needs a decent network of routes covering all districts, not solely services along the main corridors. The decision to scrap the 21 is misguided. It will make access to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital worse, just at the time when more people will need to travel there following the relocation of many services from Selly Oak.”**

“Some of the services that are being cut or withdrawn have been done so by stealth – they have been operated with ancient buses with little publicity. It is vital the new network has adequate promotion and that NXWM offers discount fares to attract passengers as Stagecoach have done in Manchester, rather than expecting people to put up with above inflation fare rises and a deteriorating, inferior service”.

Finally Mr. Chapman commented on the role of Centro, the Integrated Transport Authority for the West Midlands. **“Centro should be championing the interests of bus passengers. The new chair Councillor Angus Adams should launch ‘fast track’ scrutiny of the whole network review process and suspend any further projects while this takes place, as we think the process is just a mask for operators cutting services. It is time that Centro stood up for the people who fund it, the council tax payers and bus users of the West Midlands.”**

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Campaign for Better Transport is an organisation promoting the development of sustainable transport, including improved public transport services.
2. More details of the proposed changes can be found via:
<http://www.networkwestmidlands.com/web/FILES/westbhamDLweb.pdf>
3. Users of the services affected by the review can have their say at two events organised by Centro in Birmingham City Centre next week. A “Transport Users Forum” is being held on Tuesday 13th July at Centro House in Summer Lane, commencing at 7.00 p.m. Passengers can also make comments at a surgery in Victoria Square opposite the Council House on Wednesday 14th July between 12.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m.
4. For more information contact

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