

Submission by Stevenage Bus Users Group (BUGS)
to Environment & Economy Select Committee 22 November 2017

General State of Local Bus Services

Earlier in the year we saw a dramatic drop in the overall service due to a major review by Arriva of the bus fleet at Stevenage depot mainly due to the condition of the vehicle after a major inspection by the Engineering Director of Arriva Kent and South East Area. This resulted in a lengthy period of shortages of vehicles but now this has been resolved and are up to strength in vehicle numbers.

However, observations have been made about the fleet and two points keep coming up. Namely, one, cleanliness of the outside of the vehicles and two, rubbish in the vehicles. One passenger said the windows were so dirty you could not see out of them. We know there is a problem during the winter when there are very low temperatures the cleaners cannot be used as they freeze up. We have recently noticed a film of dirt on the windows do perhaps the cleaning blades need replacing on the cleaners. The other problem has been rubbish left by passengers in the vehicle. On local town services we have not seen much litter except for left free Metro papers on the floor but on the 100/101 service we have noticed food left, like buns and food containers left behind. One comment on the state of vehicles inside has been of a "musty" smell inside the vehicles on early morning journeys possibly due to the "mop down" of the floor undertaken the night before. Could not the vehicle be aired overnight in the depot, except in Winter months or a spray used or a different type of cleaner with a scent used in the cleaning of the vehicles?

Now in regard of bus operations we have received complaints about vehicles stopping outside the railway station NOT at peak periods when buses are in the centre lane and people have indicated by holding out their hand and the bus has NOT stopped. But generally there is a problem with the management of running of the service due to NO supervision.

There is a persistent problem of buses coming onto stand at the time they are due to leave, so making them late leaving the bus station quite often due to talking with fellow drivers.

Another problem is that if the bus shuttle from the depot is late or missing again this causes a problem. But worst of all is if as there is a major accident as last Saturday 11 November 2017, the town's main roads like Monkswood Way and Broadhall Way became gridlocked and the bus services were totally disrupted. It took 1 hour to get from Oaks Cross to the town centre, 30 minutes waiting for a bus and 30 minutes for the journey. Also it affects drivers coming into work, they are delayed and so services are missing due to no driver being available. But this can be overcome by better service management by having a service regulator as they do at TFL or even Stagecoach in Devon, by radio control working with satellite tracking system as used on the real time information system or by a regulator based from 0800-1800, Monday to Friday, in the bus station regulating the service and on call to regulate service when we have problems on a Saturday or Sunday. With the service overcrowding at times on the roads this is now a permanent problem and needs bus regulation when problems arrive.