

news release

FROM Yellow School Bus Commission

18th November 2010

Yellow School Bus Commission Responds to Government Criticism by Reasserting Case for School Buses

THE Yellow School Bus Commission (YSBC) has reasserted the case for building a home to school bus network for schoolchildren across the UK - but accepts that the current financial climate dictates that investing in large scale regional pilots is more appropriate in the short term.

The Commission remains convinced of its key recommendation to progressively introduce dedicated school buses to Britain's primary schools because the clear benefits remain unchallenged by the previous Government's response, earlier this year, to the YSBC's comprehensive report in 2008.

These clear benefits include improved safety and security for children and the £462m of economic and environmental benefits from removing 130m cars from our roads at a time when the funding of other policies to encourage modal shift is under pressure following the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The RT Hon David Blunkett MP, Chair of the Yellow School Bus Commission, said: "The Commission fully understands that the current significant pressures on the public purse prevent an immediate commitment to a national roll-out of dedicated school buses, but feels that the Government should invest in further large-scale pilot schemes to validate beyond doubt the significant gains for safety, energy conservation, congestion reduction and the environment that we have identified.

“The Commission will continue its work over the next few weeks and months at a regional level to encourage further consideration of our proposals. We recently met with the Welsh Assembly, who expressed a real interest in our findings – mirroring the willingness to examine pilot programmes that we heard in Scotland – and we will look to carry out similar meetings at a regional level in the future.”

Ends

Notes to News Editors: For further information contact Duncan McGraw of First on 07889 095726 or Rob Newman, on behalf of David Blunkett MP, on 07769 934008.

1. The Yellow School Bus Commission includes representatives of the main political parties and experts in education and transport:

Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP (Chair): Labour Member of Parliament for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough. Former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Former Home Secretary and former Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

Councilor Lt Col Tex Pemberton OBE: Until very recently, Conservative Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport with West Sussex County Council.

Garth Goddard: recently retired Programme Director for the North West Centre for Excellence national transport efficiency project, for 8 years Head of Cheshire County Council's Transport Coordination Service and former advisor to the Shires' Public Transport Consortium.

John Burch: Deputy Director of Operations at the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) representing the bus and coach industry. He sits on the CPT School Transport Committee and the Department for Transport's School Transport Experts Panel.

2. Research & Analysis

During its year long review of school transport the Commission discovered that:

- around 41% of primary pupils get to school by car. Twenty years ago this figure was only 22%.
- 21% of all secondary school pupils are driven to school, more than twice the proportion driven 20 years ago.
- in the morning the 'school run' generates approximately one in five of car trips and on some major roads journey times can more than double.
- the school run contributes around one million extra cars on the road at peak times and a further 1.2 million cars driving extra distances for school drop-offs
- cars on the school run emit about 1 million tonnes of CO2 each year.

The Commission looked at a number of dedicated school bus initiatives in Britain as well as the school bus services in North America, where over 55% of children travel to and from school in the

famous yellow vehicles. The Commission has met and talked with schools, parents, operators, transport authorities, other interested parties and, most importantly, many school bus users.

There is strong evidence that yellow school bus services will be popular and effective in Britain. Independent research by raisingkids.co.uk of around 1500 parents showed that 86% would be willing to send their children to and from school on a dedicated school bus. The pilot programmes already running in Britain have had dramatic results in tackling modal shift where typically around two thirds of primary school users were previously taken to school by car.

In the Commission's view, yellow school bus operations in Britain should not just be about buses painted yellow. They represent a standard of quality and safety and generally include the following common features:

- dedicated and vetted drivers fully trained in both bus operation and child supervision
- a guaranteed seat for every pupil with three-point, all-age seat belts
- familiarisation and safety training for pupils
- registers for younger pupils, giving reassurance to parents
- measures to support good behaviour ranging from CCTV to Codes of Conduct
- dedicated single-deck vehicles designed primarily for the carriage of school children and with yellow livery in line with US practice.

The Commission has been supported throughout by the University of Aberdeen's Centre for Transport Research in evidence and data analysis, cost benefit modelling and review. The team was lead by Professor John Nelson, while evidence review and cost benefit analysis was conducted by Dr Steve Wright.