

# NEWSRELEASE

FROM FIRST

6<sup>th</sup> November 2007

## COMMISSION LAUNCHES YELLOW SCHOOL BUS CONSULTATION

The Yellow School Bus Commission today announced the launch of a consultation on the future of home to school transport and the potential for expansion of the use of American style yellow school buses. Central to the consultation will be a special yellow school bus modified as a mobile exhibition centre which will visit up to 30 British cities and towns over the next three months as part of a Yellow School Bus tour. During the tour, feedback and findings taken from parents, teachers, children and other stakeholders will be used to inform the Commission's report that will be published next year.

FirstGroup announced the establishment of the Commission in July under the Chairmanship of David Blunkett and today announced the other members:

- Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP (Chairman), Labour member of Parliament for Sheffield Brightside, Former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Former Home Secretary and Former Secretary of State for Education and Employment.
- Lt. Col Tex Pemberton OBE - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport with West Sussex County Council and Conservative County Councillor since 1997.
- Baroness Ros Scott - Liberal Democrat front bench spokesperson for the department of Local Government and Communities and former member of the Commission for Integrated Transport.
- John Burch, deputy director of operations at the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT). He sits on the CPT School Transport Committee and the DfT School Transport Experts Panel.
- 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.

- Patrick Harvie MSP. Green Party representative for the Glasgow Region since 2003 and Convener of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee of the Scottish Parliament. Also a member and supporter of a wide range of organisations including Friends of the Earth and the Equality Network.

The Commission will examine and quantify the benefits of US-style home to school transport. It will review the yellow school bus model in the US together with similar programmes already being operated in the UK by First and other bus operators. The Commission will also examine ways of increasing the uptake of the model across the UK.

The Commission will make a number of site visits to locations across the UK where yellow school bus programmes are in operation and will also investigate how such services are delivered in North America. The Commission is expected to report in Spring 2008.

The Commission was set up following independent research of around 1,500 parents carried out by raisingkids.co.uk earlier this year. This clearly indicated that parents are seeking an alternative and viable solution for the school run. The research produced the following key findings:

- 38.7% of primary school children get to school by car – almost four times more than their parents' generation
- 21% of secondary school children get to school by car – over three times their parents' generation
- 86% of parents would be willing to send their children to school on a dedicated school bus
- The main benefits of a dedicated school bus service are the environmental benefits of reducing the school run (51.1%) and peace of mind knowing children are safe (34.4%)
- 60.8% of parents think such services should be funded through a mixture of parental contribution, local and national Government spending

Rt. Hon. David Blunkett, MP, Chairman of the Yellow School Bus Commission said: "I'm thrilled that the Yellow School Bus Commission is launching the first ever national consultation on Yellow

School Buses. We want to hear the views of parents, teachers, schools, business, the local community and, of course, from children themselves. I have a real sense that there's a public and political momentum building in support of Yellow School Buses.

These iconic vehicles have been providing a safe and high quality means of carrying children to and from school for generations in North America. By offering a real alternative to the school run they now also seem to deliver the prospect of relieving congestion from our increasingly crowded towns and cities and consequently making a real contribution to reducing our impact on the environment and climate change.

This unique and compelling group of benefits led to the establishment of the Yellow School Bus Commission. With the invaluable feedback we'll get from our consultation tour we will evaluate the best ways of delivering this sort of service and making recommendations on how we match the US in the proportion of children who get to school in this way."

Moir Lockhead, Chief Executive of FirstGroup plc, said: "Our own experience of operating yellow school bus programmes both in the UK and in North America shows that this is a tried and tested way of delivering a high quality, safe and reliable home to school transport system. The programmes deliver benefits to a wide range of groups and offer a win-win situation for everyone involved. The buses are popular with children, who recognise them from American films and TV. They enjoy travelling in them and parents and teachers appreciate the quality and security of service they provide.

"As the raisingkids survey shows, there's a huge concern among parents about the environmental damage that is contributed by the school run and an appetite to use school buses. Over 50% of children in North America travel to school in yellow buses and there's no reason we shouldn't aim for that sort of figure on this side of the Atlantic".

"This Commission will not only inform the debate on the delivery of dedicated home to school transport, but will also look at ways to bridge the funding gap that has prevented the national roll-out of yellow school buses in the UK."

Ends:

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

### **THE YELLOW SCHOOL BUS TOUR DIARY DATES: Provisional**

#### **December**

Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> December	Glasgow
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> December	Edinburgh
Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> December	Perth
Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> December	Newcastle

#### **January**

Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup> January	Cardiff
Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> January	Swansea
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> January	Bristol
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> January	Plymouth
Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January	Chelmsford
Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup> January	Norwich
Tuesday 29 <sup>th</sup> January	Southampton
Thursday 31 <sup>st</sup> January	Brighton

#### **February**

Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> February	Reading
Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> February	Northampton
Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup> February	Birmingham
Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> February	Sheffield
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> February	Leeds
Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> February	Aberdeen

#### **March**

Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> March	Liverpool
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> March	Chester

## **OTHER:**

1. For information on the Commission contact [www.ysbcommission.com](http://www.ysbcommission.com).

2. First Student UK is the yellow school bus division owned and operated by FirstGroup. It began operating yellow school buses in 2002 with 20 vehicles. Today, First Student operates over 185 yellow school buses all over the UK carrying 8,000 students to and from school every day.

The key benefits of Yellow School Bus schemes are:

#### Safety

Each scheme provides a near door-to-door service using yellow buses that are designed with the safety of passengers in mind.

Each bus has the same driver, every day, giving parents and students the reassurance they need to use the service.

Safety training is provided so that students know what to do should an incident occur.

Drivers of yellow school buses are hand picked, are CRB checked and are given additional training in managing child behavioural issues.

#### Educational

The service is a partnership between parent, school, local authority and the bus operator.

The yellow school bus creates a climate where children arrive at school in a more disciplined frame of mind and better prepared to start the school day. The scheme also offers an early warning of truancy.

#### Environmental

20% of morning rush hour traffic is attributable to the school run. Encouraging parents to put their child on a yellow school bus helps reduce the number of cars on the roads, helps reduce exhaust emissions and improves the environment for everyone.

#### Economic

Yellow school bus schemes can generate modal shift, reducing traffic congestions and speeding up traffic flows.

3. The research was carried out by raisingkids.co.uk between 5th - 9th July 2007, surveying 1,501 parents of children aged 5-16. Founded by leading parenting expert Dr Pat Spungin, raisingkids.co.uk has been online since May 2001. raisingkids has risen to become the UK's leading parenting website for all parents, whatever the age of their children. In June 2007, 200,000 visitors came to raisingkids for news, information and advice and the opportunity to participate in discussions with other parents.
4. FirstGroup plc, based in Aberdeen, is the World's leading transport company with revenues of over £5 billion a year. We employ over 135,000 staff throughout the UK and North America and move more than 2.5 billion passengers a year
5. First Student is the largest provider of student transportation in North America with a fleet of approximately 62,000 yellow school buses, carrying nearly 3 million students every day across the US and Canada.