Wiltshire Public Transport Consultation - please circulate and support option 24/7 for a network-wide solution

Wiltshire Council has launched a public consultation on the future of the bus services that they currently support. Set against a backdrop of a big reduction in overall funding for council services, they have put forward a number of options aimed at saving money from the supported buses budget, and are asking for your view on these.

What are we facing?
- Almost all Wiltshire evening, Sunday and Bank Holiday bus services set to disappear.
- Withdrawal of many rural bus services.
- Interurban and town bus services to be drastically reduced.
or a "Nuclear" Option 6 which could leave vast swathes of the county without any bus services.

These Council plans could bring local bus operators to the brink of collapse and there is not enough capacity for community transport to plug gaps.

Fortunately though, there is an alternative. As part of our research work on devolution for Wiltshire and Swindon, we have put forward a Bus Franchising proposal which will avoid the wide-ranging service cuts that would inevitably follow from adopting the consultation questionnaire options, whilst protecting and laying the foundations for the future improvement of the Wiltshire bus network. The Westminster Government have designed their devolution plans so that it would be easier for local authorities to introduce Bus Franchising, the existing legislation for which is known as Quality Bus Contracts.

We are calling this "option 24/7" because it looks at people's requirements all day, every day first ... more details at http://option247.uk , plus an FAQ document, and a link to the Council's consultation.

Bus Franchising offers
- A network that involves YOU and your community far more, genuinely working to serve your interests and shaped by your travel needs.
- A network that opens the way for simple affordable bus fares.

- A network that is better thought through, with less duplication and more journey opportunities.
- A network that is more easily linked with other modes such as rail, making your onward journeys easier and helping to encourage the greater use of public transport overall.
- A network with reinvigorated operators making a fair, secure income through working together to provide a better overall service for you.
- A network that is solid, robust, efficient, and able to deliver the savings that Wiltshire Council require WITHOUT massive service cuts, giving you the security of knowing that your bus service is safe, and available when you need it.
- A network that through innovation strives to always be fit for purpose, and fit for future challenges and expansion.

Senior figures at Wiltshire Council have informed us that Bus Franchising can be included in the devolution proposals, but only if we can demonstrate strong public support for the idea. Therefore, we need your help as follows when you answer the questionnaire:
* Question 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 - select NO (to reject options 1 through 6)
* Question 25 - please WRITE IN "Option 24/7 preferred - www.option247.uk" (to support option 24/7)

Please copy this message as appropriate, and raise the matter at local meetings too. And please get back to me or any of the team if you have questions - by a reply to this email, via the contact form on the website at http://option247.uk, via the option247 facebook group. For your parishoners who are not online, please print a summary of our case from http://option247.uk/flyer.html , and copies of the consultation are available from libraries, on buses, or from council offices.

Graham Ellis - Supporting Option 24/7 for a positive bus future in Wiltshire
Web: http://option247.uk
Facebook group: option247
Twitter: @option247

Remember - it's not about the buses - it's about the people who use the

buses!

Mrs A can no longer drive. She relies on the bus to get her from her home into the town centre where she meets friends and does her shopping.

Mr B works in X. He's unable to drive for medical reasons, and commutes by bus every day; sometimes he has to work late and catch a bus back in the early evening.

The C family send their daughter to school in X - a journey of about 6 miles. It's not their nearest school, but it's the right one for her and she gets there by bus.

Miss D and her college friends want to meet up for a 'social' at the weekend or an evening; due to high insurance premiums none of them can afford a car, and in any case they want to be able to enjoy the eveing without having to be awake (and sober) enough to drive safely home afterwards.

Mr E will be retiring in about 7 years - he's getting on a bit shakey on his legs and can no longer walk to the local railway station without it leaving him so tired he can't do his job properly

Mrs F no longer has a bus to get to her doctors, so now she requires home visits

Ms G had planned to go to college this September with a view to getting qualified and back into employment, but she's had to put these plans on hold because the bus that would get her home at the end of the college day doesn't run any more

Mr H doesn't use the bus at all. But he can't get a car parking space in town / at work any longer as all the spaces are filled with people who used to use public transport, so the gets very frustrated and parks in residential streets to the annoyance of those residents

Ms I is a health service / social services administrator, and she notices a severe strain on her 'customer transport' budget because she's now spending a lot of money (ad organisation time) or arranging and paying

for customers who used to use the bus.

It isn't about the bus service - it's about the people using the bus! If you have questions - see if they have been answered in our Frequently Asked Questions document .. if they've not been asked, then please ask them!
Graham Ellis - Supporting Option 24/7 for a positive bus future in Wiltshire
Web: http://option247.uk
Facebook group: option247
Twitter: @option247