



MICHELLE DONELAN MP

Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

19th October 2016

Dear Chris,

I recently had the opportunity to meet with Andrew Jones MP to discuss the progress of the important Bus Services Bill through Parliament. Having spoken with Wiltshire's unitary council, I fully understand the increased pressures on the local government finances and the pressure councils are under to protect funding for statutory services they provide. As you will be aware, subsidised bus services are not a statutory service, but are used when it is not economically viable for a commercial operator to run a local service that councils believe are needed.

A significant number of my constituents have raised concerns that some of the changes to bus services in Wiltshire could be to the detriment of public service provision, could lead to fewer people using public transport, increase traffic and congestion, but most significantly, reduce the potential for older and disabled residents' to maintain their independence by accessing town centres and shops.

This is a key issue in my constituency, and for all those with similar characteristics, namely a series of market towns, small villages and rural areas. For some time, I have believed that we need a radical re-think of the way bus services in our country, particularly in Wiltshire are delivered – which is why I so warmly welcome the Bus Service Bill.

I strongly believe that the future of Wiltshire's bus service would be greatly enhanced by the ability to adopt an enhanced partnership across the county. An enhanced partnership will help ensure that all services are operated by commercial companies, with no subsidy from taxpayers, but the contracts are to run specific services as set out by a Local Transport Board, which would bring together the councils, residents associations and industry experts.

The opportunity to deliver an enhanced partnership in unitary controlled councils such as Wiltshire would be a win/win. It will reduce the need for bus subsidy; deliver a more thought through service, involving the community; and will provide simple, affordable prices. Ultimately it will help encourage the use of public transport in Wiltshire.

I hope as the Bus Service Bill progresses through Parliament, the Department of Transport will look closely at including 'rural' unitary councils such as Wiltshire the ability to choose an enhanced partnership model in order to support local bus services and passengers. I am concerned that if areas like Wiltshire are excluded from this important piece of legislation it will be at the detriment to the service my constituents receive from their bus service.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle".

MICHELLE DONELAN MP

Copy: Andrew Jones MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport
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