

# Ring and Ride

## Summer 2004 **Newsletter**

### Ring and Ride lead

The Charity has been informed that its Ring and Ride service is the third largest dial-a-ride service *in the world* and is the largest such operation not run directly by a Central or Local Government agency.

**SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE DETAILS**

### Consultants confirm User views

A consultancy report commissioned by Centro—the region's passenger transport planning body, has revealed the findings of their telephone survey into what Users and non-Users think about Ring and Ride.

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### Consultation concerns User Groups

Proposals by Centro (the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive) to limit the ability of Ring and Ride Users to influence the future of the service are concerning the District and Central Advisory Groups. **SEE PAGE 4 FOR MORE**

### Trip levels reach new Highs **SEE PAGE 5 FOR THE FULL STORY**

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# Ring and Ride at top of international list



Toronto Dial-a-Ride Bus

The Charity has been informed that its door-to-door services are ranked number 3 *in the world* as judged by the number of trips it provides for Users.

At number 1 is the City of Stockholm, Sweden, which provides its 84,000 Users with four and a half million trips a year. Next comes New York at 2,200,000 trips for 73,400 Users, closely followed by West Midlands Special Needs Transport making just over 2,000,000 trips with its Ring and Ride plus Special School transport operations.

The full table reads:

	TOTAL POPULATION	NUMBER OF USERS	NUMBER OF TRIPS	ANNUAL TRIPS PER USER
1. STOCKHOLM (Sweden)	1,850,000	84,000	4,500,000	54
2. NEW YORK (USA)	8,000,000	73,400	2,200,000	30
3. WEST MIDLANDS (UK)	<b>2,550,000</b>	<b>45,600</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>44</b>
4. CHICAGO (USA)	3,800,000	38,000	1,900,000	50
5. GOTHENBURG (Sweden)	560,000	27,000	1,700,000	63
6. TORONTO (Canada)	4,400,000	31,000	1,550,000	50

Barry Connor, the Charity’s Chief Executive, commented: “It is noticeable that attitudes towards the provision of dial-a-ride services for people with mobility problems vary widely across the world. The Swedes clearly provide more than anywhere else—even Gothenburg with a population of about a quarter of the West Midlands manages to provide 1,700,000 trips a year. In the USA, the services are on a large scale but there are restrictions which limit the number of Users, something which we would not want to see here as it would mean that many of the people we currently help would be denied travel opportunities”.

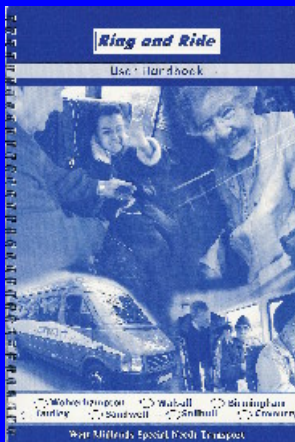
Interestingly, in every one of the top six cities except the West Midlands, the services are provided by the Local Authority whereas in the UK the top two operators (in the West Midlands and Manchester) are both Charities.

# Consultancy Report Scores Ring and Ride

Centro, the region's Transport Planning Executive, have released details of a report which they commissioned as part of their "Best Value" review of Special Needs transport.



The report, produced by the Lichfield-based JMP consultancy, summarises the findings of telephone interviews which they carried out with both Users and non-Users of the Ring and Ride service.



The most relevant section deals with User attitudes to various aspects of the Ring and Ride service. Questions were asked about how satisfied people were with the way they were treated by Ring and Ride staff; how secure they felt whilst travelling; how useful is the information about the service; how easy it is to make bookings etc.

Asked to rate these various aspects out of ten, the average rating for every one of the subjects was over 60% approval. Not surprisingly, the helpfulness of staff and the quality of information were scored highly. More surprisingly, even the ability to ring Booking Offices scored a 60%+ rating.



**“... the helpfulness of staff and the quality of information were scored highly”.**

**“... even the ability to ring Booking Offices scored a 60%+ rating”**

Trustee and Ring and Ride User Roy Laskey (who also chairs the North Birmingham District Advisory Group) was less surprised at the score for the Telephone System: “All Ring and Ride Users would love to be able to ring in and get the trips they want without encountering the occasional engaged line. However, most people realise that the telephones only get engaged because of the sheer volume of people wanting trips and the answer to that problem is more funding for more service, not more telephone lines !”

The scores for the various questions asked are shown on the next page.

# User Satisfaction Scores:

ASPECTS OF R&R SERVICE	Score*
Booking system opening times	7.71
Helpfulness of booking staff	8.76
Getting through to booking lines	6.06
Getting journeys to where you want	7.84
Getting journeys at times you want	7.66
Service Reliability	8.82
Helpfulness of drivers	9.52
Safety whilst travelling	9.61
Value for money of the service	9.61
Quality of printed information	9.14

\* = This is the mean score out of 10 given by all those questioned

## Consultation plans concern User Groups

Proposals by Centro for consulting Ring and Ride Users as part of the Passenger Transport Authority's 'Best Value Review' have attracted criticism from Ring and Ride User Groups.

The Centro proposals are for Users wishing to be consulted to travel to one of just 3 points in the region, but there is no intention to use Ring and Ride to provide the transport ! This has resulted in accusations of discrimination as it is felt that wheelchair users (especially those in powered chairs) will not be involved and anyone living away from the 3 chosen locations could be faced with a lengthy journey—which will put many off from attending.

At the Central Advisory Group meeting in May it was agreed to raise these concerns with Centro and to suggest instead that Centro officers should go out to the District Advisory Group meetings which take place regularly around the region.

**What do you think ? Let us know by writing to the Chief Executive's office at 218/220 Windsor Street, Birmingham B7 4NE or by E-Mail to: [enquiries@ringandride.org](mailto:enquiries@ringandride.org)**

# Trip levels reach new Highs

Figures for the Charity's Ring and Ride service for the year ended 31 March 2004 have shown that more trips than ever before were carried out, even though the Ring and Ride fleet size was unchanged !

1,870,000 Ring and Ride trips were made—an increase of 42,788 on the year before. As can be seen from the chart below, the biggest increase took place in the Sandwell area at 5.7% over the previous year (just under 12,000 trips) and there were four areas (South Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton and North Birmingham) where increases of 3.6% to 3.9% were achieved.

Area	Percentage change
Coventry	-1.1%
Dudley	+1.1%
North Birmingham	+3.6%
Sandwell	+5.7%
South Birmingham	+3.8%
East Birmingham	-1%
Walsall	+3.9%
Wolverhampton	+3.9%

Des Rogers, the Charity's Operations Manager, was particularly pleased with the efforts made by staff during the year: "The way in which several depots made use of the extra vehicles and staff made available by our Contracts Division to boost Ring and Ride trips points the way to how the Charity will be able to grow the service in future. But let's not forget that making the resources available is only half the story. Using them to good effect depends on the efforts of our staff, who must be congratulated for the way in which they put the Charity's policies into action".



# Charity's services praised on school web site

The services provided by the Charity to take children to Special Schools in the Birmingham area have been praised on a new web site for Victoria Special School.

In the section of the site devoted to the "Teaching and Support Network", and next to a photo of some of the Charity's staff, appear the following comments:

*"We are pleased to be part of an innovative development in school transport led by Birmingham City Council. The Council have secured the services of West Midlands Special Needs Transport to be the single provider of Home/School Transport for Victoria School. This has transformed the service to children and families.*

*We now have a new fleet of buses in radio contact with their base providing a very efficient service. The bus drivers are a vital part of the service. They are trained to a high standard and are*

*committed to working with the school and families"*

**Right:**

*"Some of our friendly bus drivers, who bring the children to school each day"*



T h e s e  
c o m m e n t s  
r e f l e c t t h e  
v i e w s w h i c h  
a p p e a r e d i n a  
G o v e r n m e n t

R e p o r t l a s t

year which featured the Charity's services to another Birmingham Special School—Wilson Stuart in Erdington, as an example of Best Practice. It highlighted the quality of the service and the way in which the Charity managed the service and so released teachers from having to supervise transport.

# Cross-Boundary service use continues expansion

The Cross-Boundary service, introduced in the Autumn of 2003, has proved to be a big hit amongst Users.

Apart from a slight dip over the Christmas and New Year period (due to the number of Bank Holidays), the numbers travelling have been increasing steadily .

In May, over 2,600 trips were made between Ring and Ride operating areas, including a number of trips



where Users travelled to railway stations by Ring and Ride in one area and were then met by another area's Ring and Ride bus in order to get them to their final destination.

In addition, another 2,400 trips were made on the distinctive cross-boundary buses within local Ring and Ride areas as the vehicles made their way to and from an adjoining area.

Don't forget that Advance Booking Forms used for Cross-Boundary trips do not reduce the number you can use on your local Ring and Ride service.

# Range of information material completed

The line-up of User information which the Charity is now able to provide has been completed by the inclusion of community language versions of the Ring and Ride Handbook on its web site.

The full list of available formats in which the User Handbook is available is now:

Standard Print  
LARGE PRINT  
Audio Tape  
CD

All of the above are available in the following community languages and dialects:

English	Punjabi	Urdu
Chinese	Gujarati	Arabic
	Bengali	

In addition to the Handbook, posters have been produced which inform potential and existing Users of the availability of the various language formats.

If you, or anyone you know, would like copies of any of these publications, you can order them (free of charge) by contacting the Charity's Development Manager (Duncan Ashlee) at the Head Office number of 0121 333 3107. Alternatively, you can contact us via the web site at either [www.wmsnt.org](http://www.wmsnt.org) or [www.ringandride.org](http://www.ringandride.org) .