



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Public Transport Safety: Translink

29 May 2024

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mrs Deborah Erskine (Chairperson)
Mr John Stewart (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Danny Baker
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Keith Buchanan
Mr Stephen Dunne
Mr Andrew McMurray
Mr Peter McReynolds

Witnesses:

Mr Ian Campbell	Translink
Mr Chris Conway	Translink

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): I welcome Chris Conway, chief executive of Translink and Ian Campbell, Translink's director of service operations. You are both very welcome. Thank you for allowing us to be here today and for providing transportation. We are really appreciative of your hosting us. It gives us a good insight into the transport hub and the operations here.

We have your presentation. If you want to speak to that quickly, we will then go to members' questions, as per usual.

Mr Chris Conway (Translink): OK. Welcome, Chair and Committee, to Grand Central station — its construction, at least — and Weavers Cross. We sent you a paper. I will give you a quick introduction, and then I will ask Ian to cover some of the highlights. We will take no longer than 10 minutes, because you have the paper, and then take questions.

We are very cognisant of the Department's long-term goal to eliminate deaths and serious injuries on the roads. We are very committed to the role that public transport can play in supporting that effort. We have a clear strategy, and that supports the DFI's aspirations in the Share the Road to Zero campaign. The two areas in which we can contribute most are ensuring that public traffic remains one of the safest modes of transport and reducing the number of cars on the roads and encouraging more people to use public transport, which will improve safety on roads as well.

Let us look at some of the recent statistics. In the five-year period 2017 to 2021, there were no fatalities involving passengers on Translink's bus and rail services. Overall, the total casualties on public transport were only 0.05% of the total casualties on roads. That is strong evidence that public traffic is one of the safest modes of transport on the roads, as is travelling on our rail network.

Safety is another important reason for people to make the modal shift to public transport. We have a strong safety management system, and our culture is very much one of "Safe home every day" for staff and customers. Safety is everyone's responsibility within Translink, and we work closely with our staff and key stakeholders to ensure the safe operation of our services.

I will ask Ian to touch on some of the key things that we do as part of that safety management system, and then we will hand over to the Committee for questions.

Mr Ian Campbell (Translink): As Chris outlined, in Translink, safety is genuinely our number-one priority, and we treat it very seriously.

I will run through some of the safety activities that we undertake, starting with buses. We have a programme that we call "management of road risk", and a pivotal point of that is the Translink training academy. We take all our front-line operational staff there and put them through extensive training. Including in and supporting that, we have a new mentor programme for newly qualified drivers. We have a dedicated team of area trainers in Metro and Ulsterbus that focuses on the driving skills necessary to deliver safe services. Our bus drivers drive in accordance with professional driver standards. We have a guidance handbook for them, which is currently under review. We constantly review our standards in line with industry best practice.

We follow an operational risk management strategy for rail. That is a multifunctional approach, because the railway is a system. It is about how the trains interact with the infrastructure and how our highly skilled staff operate the network. There is a big focus on, for example, modernising our train protection system to ensure that our trains adhere to the signalling system. We are reviewing the platform-train interface risk at all of our stations, which is very much focused on passenger safety.

We operate vehicle telematics, which is state-of-the-art technology that enables us to monitor how the trains and buses operate in service. It monitors all of our on-board safety systems and is able to track safety-related incidents, such as where a bus has had to brake sharply due to an incident. We track and trend those types of incident so that we can identify problem routes or junctions. We then follow up with DFI Roads on how we can make the network safer. We also use our on-vehicle CCTV. All of our vehicles are fitted with CCTV, and we use it to investigate near-miss incidents and actual incidents on the road network. All of our incident data is captured and centralised, and we use that to promote continuous improvement in safety.

We do a lot of work in relation to third-party work that is undertaken in close proximity to the railway. We monitor and work with construction works and private dwelling works to ensure that they operate safely and that the work does not negatively impact on the railway. Of course, we have a number of level crossings in Northern Ireland. We adopt a number of modern systems to ensure that road level crossings remain safe. We have a rolling programme for user work crossings, particularly on farmland, to ensure that those crossings are closed permanently.

We also support safety through a number of promotional activities. Our dedicated Safety Bus team does a fantastic job of going around roughly 350 schools each year. In the 21 years that the programme has been going, it has reached over 600,000 young people in those schools. Currently, we also operate a number of safety campaigns. The Play it Safe campaign targets 11-to-18-year-olds, with the support of the Irish FA and Ulster GAA. Again, that is all focused on the safe use of our network. However, we cannot do that alone. We operate a number of collaborative partnerships to ensure that our passengers and staff are safe and that people feel safe while using our networks. A good example of that is the established PSNI safe transport team, a dedicated team of officers that works alongside our staff across the bus and rail network. That collaboration has been very effective in improving and increasing safety on our network. It has reduced crime on the network and addressed some antisocial behaviour and risk for passengers. It seeks to ensure that there is a high visibility of policing and support on what is an essential part of Northern Ireland's infrastructure. There is a wide range of other stakeholders. We work with local communities; political representatives; the Education Authority (EA) and individual schools; the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland; the railway safety authority in DFI; the Commission for Railway Regulation in Ireland; and the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) here in Northern Ireland.

As mentioned, Translink's Better. Connected strategy demonstrates the commitment in Translink to respond to the Climate Change Act. We are encouraging more people to reduce their number of car journeys and to use public transport more often. By doing so, we believe that we will ensure that there are fewer vehicles on the road and reduce road incidents.

To incentivise more use of public transport, there are a number of key activities. They include increasing bus priority and increasing park-and-ride, and we have nearly 10,000 park-and-ride spaces across the Province. There is a lot of promotional activity, and, on 1 June, the active travel challenge will start, which encourages everybody to leave the car at home and to walk, cycle or use public transport. Of course, there is much-needed investment in new stations, new infrastructure, new trains and, of course, new zero-emission buses, which you experienced this morning. That is vital, and that, coupled with real-time passenger information and contactless ticketing, is how we see that we can incentivise more people to use the bus and train.

In conclusion, public transport is the safest form of land travel, as we see it. It is cost-effective and plays a vital role in decarbonising transport in Northern Ireland, connecting our communities and driving the economy. DFI's road safety strategy and the associated action plan mark a positive and proactive approach to reducing road fatalities, and we in Translink are very pleased to support that strategy. Thank you very much.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Thank you. That is much appreciated. Thank you for providing the document for us to look at. Obviously, the Department is looking at a road safety strategy. How much input has Translink had into that strategy, and, indeed, how does it fit in with your own safety policies?

Mr Conway: We are a key stakeholder in that policy. Obviously, our focus is very much on the public transport side, but a lot of the common themes are appropriate to anyone who uses the roads. We consult the Department closely on that and on the activities that we are taking on to address it from our perspective. As Ian said, we have telematics, analytical data on our buses and things like that. We highlight key junctions and key areas where we feel more could be done. That is an ongoing activity that we, as a key stakeholder, do with the Department. We are very much engaged in that and very much engaged with the PSNI on the road safety campaign that it launched recently. We work very closely with the PSNI. In fact, we had a safety conference recently, and the PSNI came along to that and presented its key safety campaign. That was with all our staff. We have a large employee base, and we hope that that will also feed into their driving behaviours when out on the roads in their own cars.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): You gave a really good statistic on how safe public transport is here. How do the accident and injury figures for public transport here compare with those for other regions?

Mr Conway: They are comparable, pretty much. It is hard to get data at a public transport level. Most people publish it at just a road transport level. On railways and buses, our figures are very comparable with those in the rest of the UK and Ireland, if not slightly better.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Your document talks about the Play it Safe campaign. It says that that is targeted at young people from 11 to 18 and that you have links there with the GAA and the IFA. From personal experience, I have been on trains going to rugby matches, and there have been 40- and 50-year-olds who maybe were not — let us just put it like this — playing it safe on public transport. Why is it targeted at the 11-18 age group? Is that because you have data that shows that that is the age group with which there are problems? Coupled with that, I have been on public transport going to concerts and seen the same issue. I am not saying that it was anything majorly bad. It was not; it was people just out for the night. Why is the campaign targeted at that younger group?

Mr Conway: It is targeted at that group for a specific reason. Particularly during school holidays, we find that young people play close to the railway or close to bus stations and do not realise they are in a higher-hazard environment. Maybe a ball gets kicked over a fence and they run to get it, or, in the evenings, there could be some antisocial behaviour while playing close to stations or modes of transport. That is what it is targeted at. It is about playing safely when close to public transport assets. It does leak a little. The school bus is more focused on how you interact when using public transport. It has a slightly different focus from that of the Safety Bus programme.

Re the other areas that you mentioned, we work on an ongoing basis to feed back to all age groups on the use of public transport and safety. We have campaigns across the network, particularly on antisocial behaviour, for example. However, that particular campaign is focused on young people playing close to railways and bus stations when off on holiday.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Just last week, I think, an incident at Fountain Hill/Spencer Road was on social media. A bus at a junction needed a crane to lift it. Apparently, there is a problem at that

junction on the route. You spoke about identifying areas where there were problems. How do you alleviate that problem, which has been long-running? What steps are being taken on that?

Mr Conway: I will hand that over to Ian.

Mr Campbell: We have investigated that incident. Translink and the local divisions of DFI Roads meet regularly and share information like that, and we seek adjustment to junctions. In that case, there is a very steep gradient. A number of vehicles — not necessarily Translink ones — have become stuck in and around that incline at the bottom of Fountain Hill in Derry/Londonderry. We have that ongoing engagement. We have good detail about exactly what happened. There is signage on that route. We have reviewed that and will share that information with colleagues in Roads.

Mr Conway: It is not on our route.

Mr Campbell: No, it was off it.

Mr Conway: None of our buses typically use that route. Unfortunately, it was a newish driver who just lost their way and ended up using that route in error. That is what caused the problem. We do not have that route for that reason. It is a difficult route.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): In that case, new drivers will be told about that and be aware of it.

Mr Conway: Yes.

Mr Campbell: New drivers are taken through route learning. They drive a number of the routes and have handbooks. All our routes are risk-assessed, but, on that occasion, the driver went off the route because it was one of the first times that he had operated in Derry on his own.

Mr Stewart: Chris and Ian, thanks so much for the presentation. It is safe to say that the more people using public transport, the safer everyone will be. Hats off to you and to your staff for everything that they do in protecting the public. The statistics are phenomenal compared with the rest of the road safety statistics. Thank you for that, which is testament to the staff.

I had the privilege of being at a school recently for a Play it Safe campaign presentation. Sometimes, young people may not even think of the dangerous environment that they are entering. Sadly, there were a couple of near misses on the Larne line last year when kids were playing about, particularly at Downshire halt. It is a continual worry. What more can we do, whether through social media or advertising, to target those who may feel the need, for whatever bonkers reason, to go on to railway lines during summer when they are off school? It seems to happen regularly.

Mr Conway: We found good success with the Play it Safe campaign, mainly because when you are trying to get a message across to young people, it is better coming from influencers whom they respect. That has worked well, because sports personalities tend to have that effect on younger people. That is particularly so when they are a local person and people know them. We will continue to do that through social media and other influencers. As we normally do when we do a campaign like that and come to the end of it, we will measure its impact through the number of people that it reached and the impact that it had, particularly over the summertime, because that is when those issues tend to crop up a bit more than usual. From that, we will decide whether we need to do more or whether we should continue the campaign that we have started.

Mr Stewart: I had not realised that it was a full social media campaign. It will be good to roll that out. Does that extend to newer platforms like TikTok and YouTube on which the kids — my kids, anyway — apparently spend most of their time?

Mr Conway: Pass. It certainly includes Instagram, Twitter and all those ones.

Mr Stewart: I am just thinking about what they are at.

You talked about the collaborative approach that you take with the PSNI. I thank Graham and the team, who have been liaising with us. Everyone who is local knows that, for whatever reason, antisocial behaviour seems to go hand in hand with halts and stations. You have done well to resolve

that through a collaborative approach, but, sadly, at times, there is still antisocial behaviour on the lines and on buses and trains. You talked about the response with the PSNI safe transport team, but it is stretched as well. At the busiest times, that resource is not there, unfortunately. Can more be done? On the funding aspect, what projects could be done or invested in to try to resolve those issues?

Mr Conway: Unfortunately, it is a societal issue that we, like other organisations that have public service roles, are trying to deal with. It seems to crop up. Thankfully, the majority of our passengers travel safely and respectfully and are respectful to our staff. Those incidents are isolated, but, when they occur, they are distressing for our staff. I give credit to our staff in general —

Mr Stewart: Absolutely.

Mr Conway: — but any staff who have been caught up in those incidents have handled themselves well, and other staff have supported them well. We have the Stamp it Out campaign, which is about making sure that we have a zero tolerance approach to antisocial behaviour. We work closely with the PSNI team. Obviously, it is only a small team, but it not only guides and helps us but goes out on the ground where we need it. Again, we have used our experience of incidents to see where we need that team most. That team goes out and tries to go to those areas at particular times of the day and night. Sometimes, the issues are seen as coming from young people, but they are not. It is right across the spectrum. A lot of the time, drugs and alcohol are involved as well.

We get good support. We are running those campaigns, and we work closely with our unions as well. The majority of our staff now wear cameras to protect them. We will roll that out a bit further as well. It is about making sure that staff get the support that they need, and we work closely with the union to do that.

Mr Stewart: My final point is that, obviously, there are the body cameras, but CCTV is also in place on the trains and buses. Is that assisting with the ability to prosecute instances where antisocial behaviour becomes more sinister and serious, such as when there are assaults and things? Has that been successful?

Mr Conway: Yes, we now have a very large network of CCTV on buses and trains and at stations and halts. We continue to deploy that and to improve its quality. That is also really important. It greatly assists with prosecutions. In the most recent couple of antisocial behaviour cases that we had, the people were arrested and dealt with appropriately. We also wrote to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) to ask for tougher sentencing on antisocial behaviour, particularly when it affects people who provide a public service. We want to continue to press for that.

Mr Stewart: Thank you.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Before I come to other members, I advise that a Translink photographer is here to take some photographs of us in action. Are members content for the photographer to do that? I have never seen a politician refuse a photo opportunity. *[Laughter.]* Members are content for the photographer to come in.

We have a few minutes left in the session. I am keen for us to look at other aspects, so I ask members to keep their contributions short and to the point.

Mr Baker: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr Boylan: She looked at you there, Danny.

Mr Baker: Mine are always short anyway —

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Danny's are, yes.

Mr Baker: — to be fair. I have a couple of wee questions. The first one is on the PSNI safe transport team. Is better use made of that team on the trains than on the buses, or is there an equal spread?

Mr Campbell: It depends on what is going on at the time. The team deploys in the areas of greatest need. It also works with community policing in specific areas, which we find to be very successful. I

have to say that that, coupled with working closely with community representatives, is generally where we get the best result. The safe transport team is out and about on the bus and rail network, and, at any given time, it will target areas where there are, potentially, specific issues.

Mr Baker: Fair enough. I will be a bit parochial, as I am a West Belfast rep. The Glider is class. I champion young people; I volunteer in a youth club, and I have been involved in many projects with you and with Damian Bannon and Sean McGreevy. When that first opened, we had massive problems in the Colin area, which I particularly represent for the party, where we had the wee shuttle buses. This is an important point, because it is about collaborative working. As a youth worker, I remember many a night that I had to ride the bus, because buses were being attacked, and I had to work with the unions to get the service to fully represent the whole area. That was successful, but it was firefighting, so I would say that preventative measures are best.

I have always floated this wee idea as the way forward, especially for young people and safeguarding for them. They are not always the ones involved in antisocial behaviour, but they tend to get the headlines when it kicks off on the Glider route, whether it is in the west of the city or in the east. There is definitely a place for youth workers. I do not know how you would do this with the unions and staff and all that, but there could be a specification for youth workers to ride the bus. Here is the problem that we found: the behaviour was happening not just on a Friday and Saturday night when people would expect more trouble or to be less safe and would maybe avoid public transport; it could be on a random Tuesday that something just kicked off and the service was pulled from the community or, for whatever reason, something happened and our young people were not safe on the buses.

I am always putting the idea out there that there could be a place for youth workers. I know that you work collaboratively with the PSNI, but youth workers could be the way forward, especially on the Glider, with the transient youth just jumping on and off it. That is completely different from what it is like on the train. That is why I asked about trains and buses, but that data might be harder to gather. That is not a question; I am just throwing it out there that there is a place for youth workers.

Mr Campbell: What I would say about that, Danny, is that we recognise that, in a number of areas, including West Belfast, the role of the community representatives is vital in ensuring that public transport remains safe and in dealing with all issues on the network. We are open to discussions at a local level about how we can best do that.

Mr Baker: It would be a great wee pilot scheme.

Mr Boylan: Thank you very much for your presentation. Most of this has been covered, but I will raise one point. Your document mentions:

"Capital projects focusing on train protection and platform risk improvements."

Will you expand on that a wee bit, please?

Mr Campbell: I can pick that up, Chris.

Mr Conway: Go ahead.

Mr Campbell: We recently fitted all our trains with the latest version of what is known as the train protection warning system, which automatically brings a train to a stop if it is approaching a signal too fast. In effect, it is an automatic train protection system. We are fitting additional signals across the network as part of a rolling programme. That ensures the safety of the network. Earlier, I talked about treating trains and infrastructure as one system, and that system works across both.

We constantly carry out risk assessments for platforms on the rail network, and there is best practice based on learnings from incidents in Great Britain and reports from the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB). We have picked up on some of the lessons learned there and are rolling that best practice out across the rail network here in order to improve it. When we talk about platform/train interface, we basically mean passengers boarding and alighting from trains —

Mr Boylan: Just *[Inaudible]* —

Mr Campbell: — and how you make that safe.

Mr Boylan: — across the board, and find out —.

Mr Campbell: Yes, that is it.

Mr Conway: Ian touched on a point that is worth mentioning again. We are totally integrated with the Rail Accident Investigation Branch and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) across the UK. We go to all those meetings and pick up learnings on rail safety from across the UK and from Ireland, working closely with Irish Rail and the Commission for Railway Regulation (CRR). We pick up on all the learnings and see what is appropriate for us to deploy.

Mr Boylan: I can see that. Those of us who were on the bus this morning enjoyed the trip down. In my time, I have seen major changes over the last 10 to 15 years. Long may it continue. It is good to learn and get different practices from across the board.

Mr Dunne: Thanks, gentlemen, for your presentation. I have a couple of quick ones. Do you have any update on the concessionary fare scheme in light of the progress on the recent budget?

Mr Conway: That will be a decision for the Minister. He has not announced anything further on it, so I do not have anything further.

Mr Dunne: The other issue is the fare increases, which are coming into play in a few days' time, in early June. I appreciate the challenges around that. Rail fares are up by 10%, and bus fares are up by 6%. Obviously, you are always keen to increase numbers, and I know that you have made progress on that. How do those prices compare with prices in the rest of the UK?

Mr Conway: On bus and rail, particularly rail, our prices still compare well across GB. We always look at those benchmarks and make sure that we try to keep our fares representing good value for money. We also have a few discount schemes to encourage people and to deliver value for money for them. As the DFI officials mentioned earlier, our fares sit in a policy that is related to whatever funding we get from government — that is our fares revenue — and how we provide a sustainable service with both those pieces of funding. That means that we have to adjust our fares to that policy.

Mr Dunne: The yLink scheme will continue.

Mr Conway: Yes, it will continue; it gives 50% off. There is also the iLink scheme, which gives significant discount on weekly and monthly tickets. Obviously, using contactless payment is an opportunity for people to get discounts by using the day tickets, for example. Once you have tapped twice, the rest of your travel is free for the rest of the day. There are good value-for-money discounts that people can avail themselves of.

Mr Dunne: I appreciate that. The progress on contactless is important. When you go elsewhere around the UK and Europe, you see that that is the way to get passenger numbers up. One complements the other; they go hand in hand.

My other point is on the community partnerships. I encourage you to continue that collaborative work. In my area, there are seasonal issues in Helen's Bay given that a beach is there. I know that you have a positive partnership with the PSNI and council and that there are antisocial behaviour teams. They will be required from now on; those challenges usually come up when the sun comes out. I encourage you to keep up the good work on that.

Mr McMurray: Thank you very much for the presentation. I use public transport, as do my wife and children. Thank you very much; it is a great service.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): You did not declare an interest. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McMurray: Well *[Inaudible.]*

Mr Boylan: He is declaring it now, Chair. He is new to the Committee, so we will let him off.

Mr McMurray: My questions are in no particular order. Will you elaborate on the training that you give your drivers, if that makes sense? I do not mean in the physical driving of the bus; I mean in soft skills.

When my family use the bus, they generally feel safe, but, obviously, issues will maybe arise. What sort of de-escalation training is there? What training is there for bus drivers to deal with vulnerable road users? I am thinking of those road users who maybe have mobility issues and cyclists. I am passed on the road regularly by buses. You mentioned some of the programmes, but there is another one — Stayin' Alive at 1.5. I am not sure if you guys have come across that, but I think that, as a cyclist, that kind of programme would be much appreciated, even from a visibility point of view. I will run my questions together, Chair, if that is all right.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Yes.

Mr Boylan: Keep it going.

Mr McMurray: I will keep it going.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): *[Inaudible.]*

Mr Conway: We can meet with you separately on some of your comments.

Mr McMurray: They are important, and I just want to highlight them.

I walk very regularly. I get that there is an increase in the services that come from the towns to Belfast — essentially, the commuter lines — during not only commuter times but social times. I know that it is a double-edged sword; you have to have the demand in order to make it viable, but then, if it is not there, people cannot use it and there is no demand. I understand that, but we have to bear it in mind.

I have a question about active travel. It is really good. One way that it can be increased is by putting bike racks on buses. Again, I am not sure if that is a viable option. I can do it, because I have a dinky wee foldable bike. That is not an option for everybody, but getting a bike on to a bus would certainly make things so much easier.

We talk about 15-minute cities. Again, I would also say that the solutions for cities are very often not the solutions for towns or what other people want. Do not just think, "We will do this strategy for the city, and we will ignore the rural areas." That is important.

Finally — I promise, Chair, I am promising —

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Yes.

Mr McMurray: — the Journey Planner app is really good. I use it regularly. It is simple, and it gives you lots of options. I was really interested in the real-time info that you discussed. You talked about the telematics on a bus and things like that. I am not a computer programmer by any stretch of the imagination, but being able to have that real-time information is important. It tells you, "This bus is arriving at x time". That might be OK in the cities but not everywhere. I appreciate that there is a lot there, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): We are out of time.

Mr McMurray: It is a good subject.

Mr Conway: It is, and Ian and I could probably spend another 20 minutes with you on it. I will try to answer you very briefly, but we are free to follow up with you and give you a bit more detail.

Probably about half the training for a bus driver is about driving the bus. The other half is dealing with customers and any issues that may occur. The PSNI has provided us with some training on de-escalation and that sort of thing. Obviously, we provide training. We work very closely with the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), for example, on training for people with different needs and making sure that drivers are trained in that. We use the Just a Minute (JAM) card as well for people who have those needs.

That is all a comprehensive suite of training. Obviously, there is annual training for drivers to try to refresh that and bring it up to speed with new learnings. Training on driving safely on the road will include how we drive safely alongside cyclists, and we work with Sustrans and try to take its guidance

on board and train some of our drivers in that. In fact, when we rolled out Glider, we did a very specialised piece of training about Gliders and cyclists.

We are very conscious that a lot of the things that we do are not only essential in urban travel but very beneficial in rural travel. Real-time passenger information has been available for Metro services for a number of years, but we have now started a programme to roll it out across our entire network so that you can see that information. We are rolling out a new Journey Planner app as well so that you can see your bus on a map. The app will show you where the bus is and when it is coming. That is coming. We will do that first on Goldline, probably, and then we will roll it out across the rest of Ulsterbus over a period of probably two years. That is certainly in our programme. It was originally done only in urban services because of the cost, but now the cost of the technology has come down a wee bit. There is also the fact that we need to integrate our services more, and we feel that it is beneficial to do that right across the network.

I think that I covered most of your questions.

Mr McMurray: I have your key points.

Mr Conway: We are certainly available to follow up on the detail with you.

Mr McMurray: Thank you very much.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Thank you. Keith, you have minus two minutes, so I do not know how we do that. Try it and see.

Mr K Buchanan: How does that work?

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): I do not know.

Mr Stewart: Speak backwards.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Try it and see, then.

Mr Boylan: Get a DeLorean.

Mr K Buchanan: I will be quick. I have just one question. It is about assaults on staff. You touched on training and de-escalation. What does your zero tolerance policy actually mean? If there is an incident on a bus — two individuals may start to fight or whatever — how much does the driver engage with that? Say an individual attacks a bus driver and is found guilty for whatever crime, what do you do? Is that person then banned? Can you do that technically?

Mr Campbell: I will pick up the point on zero tolerance. Zero tolerance means that we do not tolerate any assaults either on our other passengers or, particularly, on our staff. Where there is aggressive behaviour, assaults or even a verbal assault on a staff member, we will make decisions that are based on safety. However, that may involve stopping the vehicle and calling the police. Our staff are trained to de-escalate rather than to intervene. Obviously, we have a duty of care to all our passengers. We will prosecute under our railway by-laws and our conditions of carriage on buses. We have successfully prosecuted a number of people who have been involved in antisocial behaviour.

In a more general sense, overall, public transport is very safe. We do not get a lot of that behaviour. Rightly, when it does happen, it hits the press. As we said, our staff do a fantastic job dealing with it. The resilience of some of our staff who have had to face those difficult decisions should be noted. Overall, we have good collaborative arrangements with the PSNI, community groups, as I mentioned, and our trade unions. We work collaboratively with them to ensure the safety of not only our customers but our staff.

Mr Conway: Sometimes a judge will issue a ban.

Mr K Buchanan: OK. He can do that, but can you do that? Legally?

Mr Conway: We can do that under the railway by-laws, but it is a bit more difficult than it is on buses.

Mr Campbell: It generally happens as a result of a court direction.

Mr K Buchanan: The court will direct you. Thanks, I will leave it there. That is minus one, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mrs Erskine): Super. Thank you very much for your presentation and for allowing us to ask questions on that subject. We really appreciate it, and we look forward to seeing the hub. Thank you for now. We really appreciate your time today at the Committee.

Mr Conway: Thank you, Chair, and Committee members.