

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 29 JANUARY 2024 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS**

Present:

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Chair)	Bradford Council
Councillor Peter Carlill (Deputy Chair)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Eric Firth (Deputy Chair)	Kirklees Council
Councillor Caroline Firth	Bradford Council
Councillor Mohsin Hussain (Transport Engagement Lead)	Bradford Council
Councillor Andrew Loy	Bradford Council
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw	Bradford Council
Councillor Liz Rowe	Bradford Council
Councillor Peter Caffrey	Calderdale Council
Councillor Colin Hutchinson (Transport Engagement Lead)	Calderdale Council
Councillor Scott Patient	Calderdale Council
Councillor Moses Crook	Kirklees Council
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin	Kirklees Council
Councillor Oliver Edwards	Leeds City Council
Councillor Helen Hayden	Leeds City Council
Councillor Annie Maloney (Transport Engagement Lead)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Armaan Khan	Wakefield Council
Councillor Matthew Morley	Wakefield Council

In attendance:

Kim Cain	Arriva
Andrew McGuinness	CPT
Brandon Jones	Firstbus
Kerry Peters	Northern
George Thomas	TPE
Henri Rohard	Transdev
Paul Turner	Transdev
Simon Warburton (Executive Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Mick Bunting (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Haskins (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Myles Larrington	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair, Councillor Hinchcliffe, opened the meeting by stating that

councillors from across West Yorkshire had gathered to discuss bus and rail issues and the impact on passenger transport in the region. The Chair observed that the meeting was supported by officers from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, along with the presence of bus and rail operators who were available to take questions.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Neil Buckley (Leeds Council), Councillor Peter Clarke (Bradford Council) and Councillor Peter Kilbane (York Council). Councillor Andrew Loy (Bradford) attended in place of Councillor Peter Clarke.

3. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests at the meeting.

4. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no agenda items that required the exclusion of the public and press.

5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Transport Committee held on 16 November 2023

In relation to the minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 16 November 2023, Councillor Hutchinson raised a point regarding page 3 of the report, noting that in the previous meeting, it was mentioned that a letter would be sent to Rail Northern Partnership seeking clarification on staffing levels and the revision of public facilities after the consultation on ticket office closures. Seeking confirmation, Councillor Hutchinson enquired whether the letter had been sent and if there had been a response.

The Chair, Councillor Hinchcliffe, confirmed that the letter had been sent, and verbal assurances were received from Rail Northern Partnership regarding their intention to initiate recruitment. However, the Chair pointed out that there had been a freeze on vacancies by the operators. The Interim Director of Passenger Experience & Assets provided additional information, stating that the letter was indeed sent, and the report referenced the actions rail operators would take to implement the outcomes of the consultation on ticket office closures.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 16 November 2023 were approved.

6. Passenger Experience Update - Bus and Rail

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Passenger Experience & Assets, providing an update on West Yorkshire's public transport network.

Officers introduced the report, covering various aspects of the transport

system. Weekday bus use in December increased to 87% of baseline, with overall bus use reaching 89% of baseline. Park and ride sites experienced 81% of 2019's passenger journeys. Bus operators implemented service changes to enhance punctuality, and the closure of Bradford Interchange led to emergency operating plans. Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI) improvements were discussed to address "ghost buses," and occupancy data on displays was discontinued.

Fare updates included frozen U19 fares and changes to adult tickets. Bradford Interchange's temporary closure was precautionary due to safety concerns. Rail passenger trends and network changes were also detailed, along with performance measures and the impact of strike action. Passenger satisfaction and attitudes were covered, encompassing rail user surveys and travel statistics. Enhancements, including major blockades and station revamps, were highlighted for better customer experience.

The Chair highlighted that a bus update had been distributed to members at the start of the meeting, expressing concern about the inconvenience caused by the closure of Bradford Interchange. She emphasised the importance of addressing the issues and creating a more stable arrangement for the traveling public.

The Executive Director for Transport provided an overview of the decision to close the bus facility at Bradford Interchange due to safety concerns related to adverse weather conditions and ongoing construction work. He provided details of an incident on 22 December which led to the closure of the Interchange in the interests of public safety. The Executive Director for Transport explained the challenges in inspecting the unique structure of the bus station, the approved business case for addressing structural issues, and the ongoing inspection process. The bus station is expected to remain closed for the next two months for inspection work, and an emergency operation plan has been in place since 4 January 2024. The Combined Authority has been working to operate buses temporarily in alternative locations and has received support from industry partners and Northern Rail. The Executive Director for Transport highlighted efforts to provide information, improve signage, and assist the public during this period.

Members made the following observations:

- The Chair sought measures to gauge customer experience during the disruption at Bradford Interchange bus station, emphasising the need for regular updates. The Interim Director of Transport Operations & Passenger Experience outlined efforts to enhance passenger experience, address accessibility issues, and gather feedback for continuous improvement.
- A member raised questions about the survey on Bradford Interchange and emphasised the need for clear communication about the duration of disruptions. The Executive Director for Transport highlighted the uncertainty around the necessary works and the focus on exploring options for safeguarding the city centre's presentation for 2025.

- A member enquired about the impact on Bradford officers and WYCA staff's redeployment. The Interim Director of Transport Operations & Passenger Experience explained about the measures being taken including collaboration with Bradford Council such as resource planning discussions, and ongoing efforts to manage the situation.
- The Chair expressed concerns about the ongoing impact on Bradford Council's responsibilities and stressed the need for regular updates on costs and progress. The Chair called for a commitment for ongoing support and investment.
- A member expressed disappointment in service cuts in Calderdale and emphasised the impact of reliability on people's decision to use bus services. Bus operators highlighted ongoing efforts to improve reliability, adjustments to timetables, and challenges related to traffic conditions.
- A member raised concerns about 'ghost buses' and sought a commitment from operators to report cancellations promptly. The member also highlighted communication issues and sought specific contact details for public enquiries. Paul Turner from Transdev addressed 'ghost buses' concerns, acknowledged challenges, and outlined ongoing efforts to improve communication and operational procedures. The Chair urged a focus on customer service, highlighted the need to improve communication, and emphasised the importance of operators meeting the passenger charter standards.
- A member sought information on Northern's station policies, particularly the introduction of licensing fees for car clubs in station car parks. Officers responded by explaining plans to integrate active travel and car clubs at stations.
- A member praised Network Rail's communication on the TransPennine Route Upgrade, highlighting it as a significant investment for the North.
- Councillor Oliver Edwards' expressed concern about rail strikes, urged better relations between companies and unions, and shared a passenger's experience of regular train cancellations. Kerry Peters from Northern Rail and George Thomas from TransPennine Express acknowledged challenges with train cancellations, emphasised the ongoing efforts to address staffing and training issues, and apologised for the inconvenience caused to passengers.
- The Chair emphasised the importance of improving trade union relations and requested a response to Cllr Oliver Edwards' concerns outside the meeting. George Thomas expressed commitment to restoring relations with trade unions but highlighted limitations due to a national mandate.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Committee noted the content of the report and the feedback provided.
- (ii) That the Committee noted the updates provided in the report.

7. Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Update

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transport Policy & Delivery, which aimed to update the Transport Committee on the Combined Authority's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme. The report sought approval for the proposed allocation of additional 'Phase 3' funding of £13,373,000 for the 2024/2025 financial year and a change request to modify the scope of the BSIP Superbus element, releasing an additional £3,168,245 from the existing Bus Network Plan and Superbus scheme budget.

Officers introduced the report, highlighting that the Combined Authority had received indicative awards from the Department for Transport (DfT), totalling £77,724,512, for the BSIP programme. Additional 'Phase 3' funding of £13,373,000 was announced, requiring updated documents and information submissions to the DfT. The proposed allocation of Phase 3 funding aimed to support existing priority schemes, including the Mayor's Fares, Bus Network Improvements, and Enhanced Safer Travel Partnership. The West Yorkshire Bus Alliance's Executive Board endorsed this approach.

Programme updates included the positive impact of the Mayor's Fares scheme on bus patronage and passenger satisfaction. Bus Network Improvements, specifically the Superbus schemes, had shown increased passenger numbers. Enhanced Safer Travel Partnership initiatives, such as deploying Police Community Support Officers, were progressing. Other updates highlighted the launch of enhanced bus services and ongoing efforts to monitor and evaluate the BSIP schemes' impact.

A change request sought approval to draw down additional funding for the Wakefield and Halifax to Huddersfield Superbus schemes. The report concluded with updates on staffing, the 'Walk it Ride it' campaign, and ongoing monitoring of the BSIP's impact on passenger perceptions and travel habits. The Committee was requested to approve the proposed Phase 3 funding allocation and the outlined changes to the BSIP programme.

Members made the following observations:

- The Chair, Councillor Hinchliffe, highlighted the importance of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and expressed the need to maximise funding for both Mayor's Fares and bus service improvements.
- A member raised concerns about the increased costs of BCIP projects, questioning factors beyond inflation. Officers explained approval had been sought for additional BCIP funding to support bus services, attributing increased costs to operators with higher expenses.

- A member spoke about challenges with bus patronage returning to pre-pandemic levels, impacting costs.
- A member enquired about flexibility to rebalance assumptions if patronage increases. Officers mentioned the possibility of adjusting contracts based on service developments.
- A member emphasised the importance of engaging with communities on the ground and sought clarity on the budget allocation for key towns. The Chair, Councillor Hinchcliffe, noted a 20% increase in Superbus use, attributing it to positive impacts from investments.
- Paul Turner from Transdev provided insights into the 3-year tapered funding agreement, mentioning a potential two-year extension. Paul Turner highlighted positive outcomes from investment in Keighley, including increased ridership and growth on specific routes. The Chair, Cllr Hinchcliffe, expressed satisfaction with investing in trial routes to reduce vehicle congestion.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Committee noted the content of the report and feedback provided.
- (ii) That the Committee approved the approach to allocating the BSIP Phase Three funding and these proposals are submitted to the DfT by 31 January 2024 and form the basis of an updated Enhanced Partnership with operators.
- (iii) That the Committee approved that the change request (Appendix 1) be approved, to the change of scope of the BSIP Superbus element of the scheme, and to release a further £3,168,245 from the existing Bus Network Plan and Superbus scheme budget, taking the total approval from £7,998,434 to £11,166,679, subject to discharging the Conditions delegated to the Executive Director of Transport. The total scheme cost remained at £29,100,000. The additional approval would fund:
 - Up to £2,000,000 to deliver the Wakefield Superbus scheme.
 - £1,168,245 increase in cost to deliver the revised Halifax to Huddersfield Superbus scheme, increasing the budget from £1,469,527 up to £2,637,772.
- (iv) That the Combined Authority will provide funding to the bus operators, by using existing contractual arrangements, for expenditure of up to £11,166,679 from the Bus Service Improvement Plan Revenue funding.
- (v) That future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway, approval route, and tolerances outlined in the report. Where required, any future committee level approvals be delegated to the Transport Committee.

8. Rail Strategy Update

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director for Transport, addressing the public consultation outcomes of the emerging Rail Strategy.

Officers introduced the report. The report sought the Committee's endorsement of the revised Rail Strategy Executive Summary and full document before submission to the Combined Authority for approval on March 14, 2024. The Rail Strategy, integral to the new Local Transport Plan, prioritises growth, station improvements, decarbonization, and freight capacity. During the consultation period from June 12 to September 3, 2023, 174 responses were received, with 91% expressing support for the Rail Strategy.

Feedback emphasised the importance of integration, electrification, environmental considerations, and station improvements. The Committee considered all comments, leading to strengthened wording in the Rail Strategy, addressing concerns raised during the consultation. Reflecting on the Network North proposals, amendments were made to align with the region's priorities not covered in the government's plans, including resolving rail capacity at Leeds station, and progressing electrification projects.

Members made the following observations:

- A member emphasised the need for a strong business case for Calderdale electrification and its inclusion in the Network North program. He further highlighted the importance of linking the Castlefield corridor with hospitals and Manchester Airport, urging references to such schemes in the West Yorkshire Rail Strategy.
- A member welcomed the consensus around greater integration with public transport and active travel, emphasising the core role of decarbonisation. The member highlighted the priority of the Penistone line and its absence in the report.
- A member commended the report's positive aspects, emphasising the need for improved accessibility at stations and advocating for an accessibility audit. The member urged quick progress, particularly regarding audible announcements for cancelled services.
- A member expressed satisfaction with the additions to the report, particularly the Colne to Skipton rail line. He advocated for continued support for projects like Laisterdyke and keeping options open for strategic updates in that area.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Committee noted the content of the report and the feedback provided.
- (ii) That the Committee noted the outcome of the Rail Strategy public consultation.
- (iii) That the Committee endorsed the revised Rail Strategy Executive

Summary and Rail Strategy full document prior to submission to the Combined Authority on 14 March 2024 for adoption.

9. Local Transport Plan (LTP) Update

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director for Transport, which provided an update on the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) revised program, co-development with district partners, and the engagement and consultation approach.

Officers introduced the report which explained that the Combined Authority and district partners were actively co-developing a new statutory LTP4 for West Yorkshire, aiming for adoption by mid-2025. Legal advice guided the development process, endorsing a two-stage consultation approach. The LTP program, focusing on strategic ambition, vision, and objectives, was underway with district partners, emphasising a co-developed, jointly endorsed transport plan.

Stage 1 aimed at delivering a co-developed vision and high-level policy document for public consultation in mid-2024. Stage 2 would involve building consensus around a new policy framework supporting integrated transport, district functions, and addressing strategic priorities, including Mass Transit facilitation.

The Chair, Cllr Hinchcliffe, sought approval for the two-stage process. Andrew McGuinness from the Confederation of Passenger Transport, expressed support from the operators, emphasising the often-overlooked significance of coaches. Andrew McGuinness highlighted the economic benefits associated with the interdependence of coaches and buses, suggesting collaboration with the Combined Authority on a CBT international policy position for coach sections.

Resolved:

- (i)** That the Committee noted the content of the report.
- (ii)** That the Committee endorsed a two-stage approach to consultation.
- (iii)** That the Committee noted the development of the second phase of the LTP and continued co-development of the Local Transport Plan with the district partners led by the Combined Authority to be presented for adoption by mid-2025.

10. Chair's Closing Remarks

The Chair, Councillor Hinchcliffe, announced The Director of Transport Policy and Delivery, Melanie Corcoran's, departure from the Combined Authority to the South Yorkshire Combined Authority on 9 February 2024, expressing gratitude for her seven years of dedicated work. Acknowledging Melanie's vital contribution towards the increasing capital program, the Chair extended thanks to Melanie and wished her well in her future endeavours.

11. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 13 March 2024.