

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2021 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC
HALL, CALVERLEY ST., LEEDS LS1 1UR**

Present:

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Chair)	Bradford Council
Councillor Kim Groves	Leeds City Council
Councillor Martyn Bolt (Leader of the Opposition)	Kirklees Council
Councillor Neil Buckley	Leeds City Council
Councillor Colin Campbell	Leeds City Council
Councillor Suhail Choudhry	Bradford Council
Councillor Lou Cunningham	Leeds City Council
Councillor Allan Garbutt	Wakefield Council
Councillor James Homewood	Kirklees Council
Councillor Rizwana Jamil	Bradford Council
Councillor Charlie Keith	Wakefield Council
Councillor Naveed Riaz	Bradford Council
Councillor Daniel Sutherland	Calderdale Council
Councillor Robert Thornber	Calderdale Council
Councillor Andy D'Agorne	York Council
Mark Roberts	Beer Hawk Ltd

In attendance:

Councillor Eric Firth	Kirklees Council
Councillor Helen Hayden	Leeds City Council
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw	Bradford Council
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dominic Martin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

27. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Kaushik, Cllr Salam, Simon Pringle, Cllr Scullion and Cllr Morley.

28. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared during the meeting.

29. Exempt information - possible exclusion of the press and public

Appendix 1 of Item 9 (Bus Enhanced Partnership) had originally been distributed as a private paper but had since entered the public domain. There were therefore no items that required the exclusion of the press and public.

30. Minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 17 September 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the Transport Committee meeting of 17 September 2021 be approved.

31. Notes of the joint DCSC meeting 26 August 2021

Resolved: That the notes of the informal Joint DCSC meeting of 26 August 2021 be noted.

32. Transport Network Update

The Transport Committee received an update on the current performance of the transport network in West Yorkshire, including an overview of the Combined Authority's activity and responses.

Patronage levels on the bus service were at roughly 70-75% of what would be expected for this time of year pre-pandemic; the bus service was still therefore operating within the emergency funding envelope that had been previously set. Rail services were also slowly recovering with similar patronage levels, though this recovery was exhibited significantly more in weekend and leisure travel as opposed to office-based commuting journeys. Members questioned whether this indicated that the idea of a traditional 'peak time' was no longer as significant as it had been pre-pandemic, with more consistent services throughout the day being a bigger priority going forward. However, it was noted that the current situation was still in a state of transition, with developments around the pandemic still underway, and it was difficult to predict how these patterns would stabilise.

The driver shortage discussed at the previous meeting of the Committee was still a live issue and was impacting on the delivery of bus services in the region with increased rates of cancellations, and services were operating under reduced timetables in some cases. Shortages remained at similar levels as was reported at the previous meeting, although operators were taking measures to alleviate the problem.

It was highlighted that the driver shortage was affecting not just the bus service but also other driving jobs including the HGV and private hire sectors, and the Mayor had held a round table event in October with representatives of these industries, as well as bus operators, on how to best cooperate to address the issue. £32.5 million of support nationally for roadside facilities and driver welfare had also been recently announced by the Government, and more information on this would be passed on to Members when available, though it was questioned whether this would be a sufficient amount to fully address the issue.

Members also noted that the working conditions for drivers could be inflexible and challenging, with a low-availability of part-time hours. The age of the workforce was relatively high, and there would be a need for these industries to attract new drivers; Members suggested contacting the Government for further information on their plans to support resiliency in these industries.

Some previously-reported issues surrounding licensing and testing were easing, and this was expected to have a positive effect going forward. Members questioned if anything further could be done to improve delays to licenses being issued. Officers advised that main source of the issue appeared to be a backlog that had built up throughout the pandemic, but they had been advised that the DVLA and the Vehicle Standards Agency were speeding up processes to work through this. A letter would be sent to Government asking for more information on these delays.

It was noted that the wearing of masks on public transport was quite low since restrictions had been lifted, and Members questioned whether further communications could be used around this to improve compliance and thereby increase a sense of safety amongst those who may still be reluctant to use public transportation, though it was noted that operators had no powers to enforce this. However, it was also raised the point that such messaging had the potential of perpetuating a feeling of fear, and that wearing a mask was another obstacle that may deter people from using public transport. This tied into a wider discussion that may need to be explored on the effects of the pandemic in terms of people's mental health and feelings of fear, but it was noted that the public expectation regarding public transportation may change going forward, with a higher degree of importance faced on cleanliness, and less tolerance of overcrowding.

Members also raised the following comments and questions:

- Concerns were raised over the possibility of standards for tests or training for HGV drivers being reduced as a response to the shortage, and the effect this could have on road safety.
- It was noted that a fall in the use of HGVs could lead to increased road usage and impact on congestion and air quality.
- The potential long-term impact of the driver shortage on people's engagement with public transportation was discussed, with it being noted that early negative experiences could turn people away and weaken efforts toward achieving a modal shift away from private car usage.
- The need to examine sites for potential consolidation centres to work in combination with freight was raised.
- The success of the Free Bus Sunday initiative was noted, and it was suggested that extending this could be a useful way of encouraging people to try public transportation and to increase their confidence in its safety and cleanliness. The MCard app and its ability to gift tickets was also praised.
- The need to ensure that Active Travel Network counters were being monitored and maintained was raised, and it was requested that a report be provided on this at a future meeting. It was suggested this be

further explored in the Active Travel Working Group.

Councillor Firth and Councillor Hayden joined the meeting during discussion of this item.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee notes the updates on the current performance of the public transport network provided in the submitted report.

33. Future Mobility Strategy

The Transport Committee considered a report presenting the West Yorkshire Future Mobility Strategy for consideration and discussion.

The Future Mobility Strategy was developed in 2020 with the aim of examining opportunities with new technologies and innovations in transport, such as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, mobility hubs, and car clubs, and was considered earlier this year as part of the wider Connectivity Strategy engagement. Due to developments since its initial drafting, such as the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the continuation of the pandemic, the Strategy was being reviewed for any needed updates with the intention of it being included for approval with the Connectivity Strategy as the December meeting of the Combined Authority.

Members requested more detail on the modal shift targets within the Strategy, with more evidence of how major schemes would attain their carbon pathway goals, including the potential to examine funding if this was evidence was not available. It was also highlighted that the mid-point targets listed were significantly different from those which had been previously approved, such as within the Carbon Emission Reduction Pathway. Officers advised that the listed targets had been set in 2017, before the Covid-19 pandemic, and that they could be re-examined going forward.

Members also questioned what was currently being done on the priority of keeping women and girls safe, which was a key pledge by the Mayor. It was noted that this was currently primarily the responsibility of Transport Network police, and officers highlighted a campaign by British Transport Police in partnership with the rail industry to discourage unwanted attention on the railways, with the potential of expanding this to the bus network also being explored. Other initiatives to improve passenger safety were also discussed, such as the suicide prevention work done by rail operators, and the 'Rail to refuge' scheme, which had recently expanded to bus services by incorporating the use of the M Card. New technology and apps were also expected to play a key role in passenger safety going forward, and it was hoped that the Strategy would provide the tools and environment in which more bespoke services could be provided.

Following on from the discussion of safety in the previous item, Members questioned whether the reported concerns could potentially relate more to unwanted attention rather than mask-wearing. General road safety was also raised, and it was noted that the Future Mobility Strategy would link in with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Policing and Crime's Vision Zero Strategy on this.

The importance of Demand Responsive Transport was highlighted, particularly in regards to the above-mentioned safety concerns. The current Flexibus trial in East Leeds had already generated positive feedback from vulnerable passengers. It was noted that as discussed in the BSIP, a further five other DRT schemes were currently planned for development in the region, subject to the availability of funding.

Members raised the following other questions and concerns:

- The planned housing development at Dewsbury Riverside was noted as having poor infrastructure and accessibility, particularly in regards to the limited parking at Ravensthorpe station. It was questioned whether the bus service would be sufficient to take residents to key locations such as employment and education.
- Concerns were raised over the name of the Future Mobility Strategy and whether it covered all the different aspects of the Strategy, or if it gave an impression of being primarily concerned with accessibility.
- The low response rate to the 2020 consultation was questioned. However, officers advised that when public engagement was carried out earlier this year as part of the Connectivity Strategy, over 5000 responses had been received.
- The benefits of high-speed internet connections on trains were discussed, with it being noted that the productivity benefit this enabled could encourage commuters to give up private car use.
- Members questioned where the mobility hubs discussed in the Strategy would be located and suggested that locations in areas of deprivation would provide a strong benefit to those who may not have much access to transport. Similarly, smaller initiatives such as bike rental/borrowing schemes, potentially linked to community centres, would be very useful in these areas. The Committee's previous work with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was highlighted as being a useful starting point to this.
- The Strategy's discussion of a 'gender neutral' transport network was discussed. Officers noted that this referred to efforts to make the Strategy inclusive of all groups, and that it would be updated to match the BSIP in reflecting the wider discussion of inclusivity.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee discuss the West Yorkshire Future Mobility Strategy as part of the wider West Yorkshire Transport Plan suite of documents and recommends it for discussion at the Combined Authority (for their approval).

34. Rail Strategy Capacity Chapter

The Transport Committee received an update on work currently in progress on the Combined Authority's Rail Strategy, and approval was sought for the proposed approach to endorsement of the Rail Strategy.

The report examined capacity on trains and the wider rail network and explored what capacity may be needed in the future. Two upcoming workshops with Transport Committee Members were also highlighted, one discussing a number of areas noted in the report, including capacity and

freight, and the other reviewing the draft Rail Strategy before it was submitted for approval at the March meeting of the Committee.

The importance of making full use of freight capacity was highlighted, particularly in light of the earlier-discussed issues with HGVs. Electrification of the railways was also an important goal in order to achieve the region's carbon emission targets, but this would depend on the details of the upcoming Integrated Rail Plan (IRP). Electrification of the Calder Valley line in particular was highlighted as being an ongoing concern for over a decade, and Members noted that at one time the line had been reported as top of the list for development in the Decarbonisation Strategy for 2050 produced by Network Rail. It was suggested that the Committee challenge why this had not been delivered if sufficient funding was not awarded as part of the IRP.

Members praised that the report clearly set out the scale of needed investment, noting it sent a strong message to Government on the requirements for levelling up. Developments such as the Bradford Interchange Works were also supported, with journey times expected to be reduced by this. However, concerns were raised over accessibility, particularly as historically schemes with planned improvements in this area had often failed to materialise. It was noted that the Combined Authority applied for all applicable funding available, but a significant change in national funding strategy was required in order to achieve full accessibility across stations in England within a reasonable timeframe.

It was reported that the objection to the TransPennine Route Upgrade discussed at previous meetings had been resolved following an agreement with Network Rail being secured to safeguard issues regarding work on the tunnel underneath Huddersfield Bus Station. Concerns were raised over the possibility of simultaneous roadworks occurring at Cooper Bridge in Kirklees and the B6118 road closures which were expected as part of the TransPennine Route Upgrade, as well as additional work expected on the A62, as this could have significant effects on congestion and air quality. However, officers advised that throughout the process of resolving the above-mentioned disagreement, protocols had been put in place to deal with any disruption in a wider sense, and these contained mechanisms to address the concerns Members had raised.

It was noted that as part of the TransPennine Route Upgrade, it was expected that the second platform at Castleford Station would be returned to operation, in part as divergence for trains disrupted by the upgrade. Work was currently underway on planning to maximise the benefit of this.

Resolved:

- a) That the Transport Committee notes the update on development of the Rail Strategy and in particular the Capacity Chapter.
- b) That the Transport Committee endorses the consultation and signoff process outlined in paragraph 2.12 of the submitted report.

35. Bus Enhanced Partnership

The Transport Committee considered a report providing an overview of activity to develop the Bus Enhanced Partnership for West Yorkshire, and seeking endorsement for the timescales associated with the development and duration of the Enhanced Partnership, as well as for the approach to the development of Enhanced Partnership Schemes.

The BSIP, as had been discussed at previous meetings, was submitted to Government at the end of October, and a decision regarding funding was now being awaited. However, in order to access any available funding, Transport Authorities were required to either be in a Bus Enhanced Partnership by 1 April 2022, or to be significantly on the path of establishing a franchising scheme. The Combined Authority decided at its June meeting to develop an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators whilst at the same time exploring the business case around franchising.

Officers advised that the Enhanced Partnership consisted of two significant aspects; an Enhanced Partnership Plan, which was a strategic document with the BSIP at its base which included the wider view of how bus operators, the Combined Authority, and Local Authorities would work in partnership, and Enhanced Partnership Schemes, which were more technical and went into detail on how the investment of the public sector and that of the bus operators would be applied in conjunction. There was a requirement for the Combined Authority to be part of at least one Enhanced Partnership Scheme in order to access funding, and this was currently in the development stage, with the aim of a Scheme being in place for March 2022. The Enhanced Partnership would be presented to the Combined Authority at its December 2021 meeting and then brought back to the Transport Committee after further engagement and consultation in the New Year, in advance of a final decision by the Combined Authority in February.

Members welcomed the scale of ambition showed by the Enhanced Partnership and BSIP but questioned whether it was fully achievable, and the importance of using this as an opportunity to add in more routes and more accessibility for those who had an insufficient service, rather than simply replacing services that had recently been cut, was highlighted.

It was questioned whether the target of all buses in the region meeting Euro VI emissions standards by 2026, set as part of the BSIP, was achievable. Officers advised that the target would require the Combined Authority and partners to stretch themselves, but that it was hoped that the success already achieved in retrofitting buses, particularly focused around the clean air zones in Leeds and Bradford, could be expanded across all of West Yorkshire. It was also noted that a response to the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) bid was currently being formulated, to be submitted in partnership with operators; if successful, this would bring over 120 zero-emission buses into the region.

Members questioned why only one Enhanced Partnership Scheme was currently being planned. It was noted that these arrangements were still being developed by the Government, with the latest guidance on how to frame these Schemes having been received only two days before the meeting. As only one

Enhanced Partnership Scheme was required in order for the Combined Authority to access funding and the Schemes themselves were required to be quite specific, the intention was to start at this level and examine options going forward.

Bus priority corridor schemes were also discussed, particularly in regard to the planned Cooper Bridge scheme. It was noted that although no bus lanes were able to be included for this scheme due to a lack of space available, it was intended that transponders would be used to assist with traffic management. The topography of the region limiting space in some areas was noted as a wider challenge, with roads being required to take many different forms of transport into account, and that this could lead to difficult decisions needing to be made. A pipeline of bus priority schemes was also highlighted as being ready for delivery once funding was available.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee endorses the approach to developing the Enhanced Partnership as set out in the submitted report including the timescales for public consultation.

36. Leeds City Region Transport Update

The Transport Committee received an update on current issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

It was noted that the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) bid had been announced in advance of the Spending Review; the Combined Authority had been awarded £830 million and was currently in the process of developing a programme business case to set out how this would be spent. However, it was noted for clarification that a significant proportion of this money had previously been announced, so of this £830 million, roughly £400 million was believed to be 'new' money.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee notes the updates provided in the submitted report.

37. Summary of Transport Schemes

The Transport Committee considered a report informing them of transport-related project approvals from the previous two meetings of the Combined Authority.

Resolved: That the report be noted.