

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 4 MARCH 2022 AT WELLINGTON HOUSE**

Present:

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Chair)	Bradford Council
Councillor Kim Groves	Leeds City Council
Councillor Manisha Roma Kaushik	Kirklees
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 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 Taj Salam	Bradford Council
Councillor Daniel Sutherland	Calderdale Council

In attendance:

Councillor Eric Firth	Kirklees Council
Councillor Helen Hayden	Leeds City Council
Councillor Matthew Morley	Wakefield Council
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw	Bradford Council
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dominic Martin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

49. Chair's Update

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting to take place in the newly refurbished Wellington House.

It was noted that this would be the last meeting where Councillor Groves would be in attendance as a member of the Committee, as she would be standing down at the upcoming elections. The Chair thanked Councillor Groves for her invaluable contribution in supporting transport in the region throughout her time on the Committee.

50. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Thornber, Cllr Cunningham, Cllr D'Agorne, and Mark Roberts.

51. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

Cllr Salam noted his employment with a bus operator, though this had been disclosed and recorded prior to the meeting.

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

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

53. Minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 5 November 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the Transport Committee meeting of 5 November 2021 be approved.

54. Notes of the informal meeting of Members of the Transport Committee held on 7 January 2022

Resolved: That the notes of the informal Transport Committee meeting of 7 January 2022 be noted.

55. 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. It was noted that there had been further changes to the current situation since the report had been published.

Members discussed the impact of bus service reductions, particularly in Wakefield and Kirklees, arising from staff shortages. Similar reductions to rail services were also raised, with the Huddersfield to Castleford service in particular being highlighted. It was noted that these reductions, along with increased levels of timetable changes and route alterations, risked damage to the customer base in the long-term, as early experiences of the bus service being confusing or unreliable could lead to people avoiding public transport in the future. However, the Combined Authority had intervened to maintain links on a number of routes, particularly in Wakefield, and it was hoped that the work being done as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) process, including the path to potentially franchising the service, would lead to a stronger and more reliable service in the longer-term.

Concern was also expressed for rural areas in particular, which had previously needed to be subsidised and on a number of routes had always had limited services of one bus per hour. There was a need not only to recover from the effects of the pandemic but to expand the service, but it was noted that the patronage was not present for many of these routes to be profitable under the standard model, and a new network model would be needed to make rural

routes a sustainable part of the bus service.

Members also noted that although the report referred to replacement bus services, these were not a like for like replacement for rail journeys, as bikes could not be carried onto a bus.

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

56. Bus Service Funding

The Transport Committee received an update on the current position regarding bus service funding and on the bus transport related cost pressures faced by the Combined Authority in 2022/23.

It was reported that although the Bus Recovery Grant making up the shortfall to the bus service caused by the pandemic had been due to come to an end on April 5 2022, this funding would now be extended until the end of October, although the mechanism would now be weighted to take into account the current patronage and revenue, with the Combined Authority weighting its own payment of concessionary fares in a similar manner. The extension of this funding was welcomed by Members, but it was felt that this still a short-term approach which left a great deal of uncertainty regarding funding after October, and that this pushed bus operators into taking a more reactive role, particularly in terms of service reductions. Discussions with operators were underway to try to limit the amount of these reductions and to increase patronage, but Members raised concerns regarding the impact of inflation, as well as international events which may impact on fuel costs, though it was noted that operators being locked into contracts may mitigate temporary increases in the cost of fuel.

Members questioned how much funding bus operators had been granted. A figure of £180 million had been publicised but officers advised that some of the funding was given directly to bus operators relating to their own revenue claims and this left the exact figure unclear, but the Combined Authority had requested more transparency regarding this in its conversations with operators. However, Members noted that this seemed an unrealistic figure for preventing upcoming issues regarding the viability of an expanded bus service rather than simply deferring those issues. It was agreed that it would be vital to lobby Government for more sustainable funding going forward, and to work with the Mayor to draft a letter pursuing this.

The region was noted to be in a better position than many others regarding the recovery of bus patronage, with a particularly strong showing among under-19s, and Members praised initiatives such as the £1 evening fare. The Mayor's efforts to raise the importance of hiring more drivers were also praised, but it was noted that the shortage was still ongoing, and that it would be vital to make the industry one an attractive one for people to remain in.

In light of the uncertainty regarding future funding, it was questioned whether bus operators had provided a list of services at risk of being cut. Officers advised that an independent review was being undertaken regarding this to

gather more detail beyond what operators had already shared. The delivery of approximately 90 remaining eco-friendly buses to the region was also raised, though no update was available on this.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee notes the current position regarding bus funding.

57. BSIP/Enhanced Partnership

The Transport Committee received an update on the next steps of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Bus Enhanced Partnership.

The Combined Authority was still awaiting notification of an indicative amount of BSIP funding to be awarded. Once this had been received, a business case outline would be composed and submitted to Government, before notification of the final amount of funding would be given. Members noted that the total pot of funding available had fallen since initial announcements, and it was now believed it would be unlikely the £168 million of revenue funding being sought would be awarded. However, the challenges present also created opportunities; rising petrol prices would encourage people to consider alternatives to private car usage, and delivering a reliable and dependable service through the BSIP would support modal shift and grow a larger customer base.

Members requested clarification regarding the lack of buses for Calderdale and Kirklees within the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) bid. It was explained that the Combined Authority had coordinated bids to achieve the best result for all districts, and to compensate for the disparity within the ZEBRA bid Calderdale and Kirklees were being supported by a separate £4 million pot of funding for electric bus services, funded by the Combined Authority.

It was also questioned how the figures noted in the report regarding specific numbers of buses were decided upon. Officers advised that these were the buses that operators were willing to buy with the top-up money available.

Resolved: That Transport Committee notes the update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership development.

58. Rail Strategy

The Transport Committee received an update on the ongoing work on the Combined Authority's Rail Strategy, in the light of the Authority's response to two recent calls for evidence from the UK Parliament Transport Select Committee: Integrated Rail Plan (IRP); and the Great British Railways Transition Team: Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP).

The Transport Select Committee had visited the region in the week prior to the meeting, and had discussed levelling up through the IRP and wider connectivity for the region. It was hoped that these discussions would support efforts to challenge some elements of the IRP. The release of the Combined Authority's Rail Strategy was being delayed to focus on the response to the

IRP, with a working plan due to be released toward the end of April. A Combined Authority-TransPennine Route Upgrade briefing session was also due to take place in the week following the meeting.

The importance of North-South links, including the Penistone line, was highlighted by Members, with strong benefits potentially available from links through Sheffield to Birmingham and beyond. It was also noted that as with buses, an unreliable service would lead to a loss of customers in the long-term. Enhancing the current service would be a significant challenge, however.

Members discussed the potential for a second Leeds rail station in the light of the cancellation of HS2, given the large developments currently ongoing. It was noted that there was some debate as to whether HS2 was fully off of the table, and the Government still requested that the Combined Authority hold on to the land which had been earmarked for HS2. However, it was felt that track studies would need to be completed before potential sites for a second station could be usefully discussed, if it were determined that one was needed.

Resolved: That Transport Committee:

- a) note the update on the development of the Rail Strategy.
- b) note the following submitted Call for Evidence responses and the implications these have to the development of the Rail Strategy:
 - UK Parliament Transport Committee: Integrated Rail Plan Inquiry Call for Evidence response, at Appendix 1 of the submitted report;
 - Great British Railways Transition Team Whole Industry Strategic Plan Call for Evidence response, at Appendix 4 of the submitted report.

59. Connectivity, Shared Transport and Mass Transit Update

The Transport Committee received an update on the development of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) submission to Government, the Connectivity and Shared Transport Strategies and Mass Transit.

It was noted that since the publication of the papers, timelines had changed slightly, and the Connectivity and Shared Transport Strategy and Mass Transit submissions discussed in the report would not be submitted to the Combined Authority later in the month, but would be held back until a future meeting in order to make some adjustments and ensure all engagement was reflected.

Members questioned how bus operators would interact with a potential mass transit system. The importance of all modes of transportation working together to create a system that prioritised the end user was strongly emphasised. Conversations were already underway with bus operators regarding this, and it was noted that space existed for them to be a key part of any solution, with bus operators in many countries running tram systems, for example.

The shortage of facilities for HGV drivers was also raised, following on from discussion at a previous meeting. It was requested that officers update Members with further information regarding the status of the £52 million of funding which had been set aside for roadside facilities, and whether bidding was 'live' for this.

The report's mention of a gender neutral transport network was discussed. It was clarified that this referred to creating an accessible bus network that was safe for all users, and took account into the different kinds of journeys undertaken by different groups, including variances between men and women. In a similar vein, Members discussed the need for operators to consider how to attract more female drivers to mitigate current shortages, and it was hoped that recent efforts towards more flexible working arrangements would help in this regard.

It was clarified that a significant portion of the CRSTS funding had already been announced as part of the Transforming Cities Fund, and that roughly £400-500 million was 'new' money.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee has discussed the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and West Yorkshire Shared Transport 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).

60. Transport Committee Review

The Transport Committee received an update on the Transport Committee Review following the Combined Authority meeting on 3 February, including the proposed next steps.

Members were thanked for their contributions to the process of the Transport Committee Review, and it was noted that the changes would strengthen links with local communities, particularly by ensuring each district's transport portfolio holders were voting Members. The Committee would also take responsibility for approving relevant capital schemes going forward; this would be vital as the Combined Authority began to deliver a greater number of projects going forward due to the opportunities devolution had provided.

Some concerns were expressed about changes noted in the report to the District Consultation Sub-Committees (DCSCs), as Members were keen to ensure the valuable feedback being gained from the current format of meetings was not lost. However, it was advised that the aim of the changes was to create a more flexible format and to adjust the scope to allow a wider engagement, as well as freeing officer resources. It was suggested that a meeting with DCSC Chairs be arranged prior to the elections, to gather feedback and model a potential set-up for the DCSCs going forward.

An Independent Remuneration Panel was currently forming a recommendation for allowances going forward. Once this was completed, the Transport Committee Review would be considered for approval at the Combined Authority meeting in March, to be implemented in the 2022-2023 municipal year

Resolved:

- a) That Transport Committee notes the update on the Transport Committee Review, including the proposals agreed in principle by the Combined Authority.
- b) That members of the Committee have used the opportunity to provide any final feedback to the Chair and/or Lead Director before the review is finalised.

61. LCR Transport Update

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

Members discussed freight and logistics strategy in light of the Transport for the North consultation mentioned in the report, and an update was requested that included the potential for using canals for freight. It was noted that the Combined Authority currently lacked the capacity to undertake a detailed exploration of freight, but that information from the rollout of freeports and other areas' experiences with freights would be studied.

Members also noted that Chris Boardman had been appointed as the first Active Travel Commissioner for England, and agreed to draft a letter with the Mayor congratulating him on his appointment and inviting him to a future meeting of the Committee.

It was also requested that the Combined Authority take an active approach in informing the region's residents of recent changes to the Highway Code, following the example of Calderdale Council, which had used a variety of methods such as advertisements on buses.

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

62. Summary of Transport Schemes

The Transport Committee considered a report informing them of transport-related project approvals from the most recent meetings of the Combined Authority, the Finance, Resources and Corporate Committee, and the Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.