

**NOTES OF THE INFORMAL MEETING OF THE
BRADFORD DISTRICT CONSULTATION SUB-COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2021 AT**

Present:

Councillor Suhail Choudhry	Bradford Council
Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Council
Councillor Naveed Riaz	Bradford Council
Gareth Logan (Deputy Chair)	Public Representative
James Craig (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Stephen Hetherington (Public Representative)	Public Representative
David Hill (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Andrew Jewsbury (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Peter Ketley (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Graham Peacock (Public Representative)	Public Representative
John Prestage (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Barrie Rigg (Public Representative)	Public Representative

In attendance:

Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw	Bradford Council
Mark Fenwick	Arriva Yorkshire
Dwayne Wells	Arriva Yorkshire
Brandon Jones	First Group
Paul Turner	First Group
Pete Myers	Northern Trains
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dominic Martin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Introductions

It was decided that the Introductions item would be brought forward to open the meeting.

The Deputy Chair introduced himself and informed the Sub-Committee that due to Cllr Salam's absence, he would be chairing the meeting.

2. Open Forum

Members questioned when timetables would be available at all bus stops

across the region again. Officers advised that although it was the Combined Authority's responsibility to provide and update these timetables at bus stops, this had been disrupted by the significant impact of the pandemic on bus services. Work was underway to ensure that up-to-date information was available at all stops, but with 14,000 bus stops throughout the region a return to normality would take some time.

Members also raised the issue of train delays caused by breakdowns and signalling issues, and questioned whether sufficient maintenance was being performed. The representative from Northern noted that train performance had been generally strong, with 88% of train journeys departing stations either early or within three minutes of their scheduled time. A benefit of the pandemic had been that there had been an emphasis on the importance of performance, particularly in light of issues with the May 2018 timetable, and the work being done by Network Rail to avoid signal failures and similar issues that can disrupt service was praised.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Taj Salam.

4. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared by Members during the meeting.

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

There were no items which required the exclusion of the press or public.

6. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2021 be noted.

7. Notes of the informal joint DCSC meeting held on 26 August 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the joint DCSC meeting held on 26 August 2021 be noted.

8. Chair's Update and Transport Review

There were no comments on the Transport Review or other updates from the Deputy Chair.

9. Information Report

The Sub-Committee received an update on transport schemes within the Bradford area.

Resolved: That the information report be noted.

10. Operators Updates

Arriva

Arriva reported that passenger numbers were continuing to slowly improve. The punctuality of many services had been affected by roadworks, with two burst water mains occurring within the space of a few days and causing particular disruption to the 268 service.

Recruitment was noted as being a challenge due to the national driver

shortage, and it was felt that this was being exacerbated by the Government's focus on the impact of this issue on the HGV industry rather than on the bus services.

FirstBus

FirstBus were experiencing similar issues to those reported by Arriva regarding recruitment, and FirstBus, like other operators, were working on recruitment and retention initiatives. Some service frequency changes had been introduced recently to manage the resource available, but it was stressed that these were temporary changes to cope with the national driver shortages, and much work was going into providing the best service possible despite these shortages, particularly in the context of passengers beginning to return to the bus network.

FirstBus highlighted that marketing and publicity efforts were being directed toward communicating service levels and promoting reasons to travel to the public to encourage users back to the bus service. This included a £1 evening fare initiative. Extra investment had also been made into front-line staff, with a full-time representative now in place at Bradford bus station.

It was also noted that there had been some recent vandalism issues in Holme Wood, as had been reported in local media. These events were generally isolated incidents and had not been repeated in this instance. FirstBus would continue to work with partners such as the police, Bradford Council and the Combined Authority on any future issues of this kind.

Transdev

Transdev reported that due to the impact of the national driver shortage, they were running a temporary timetable for the Keighley to Bradford shuttle service, and a small number of local services in Keighley were still running reduced journeys. Passenger numbers were noted to be roughly 70-75% of 2019 levels. Recruitment efforts for drivers were underway to bring the service back to 100%, but there were some delays in drivers getting through the training and licensing process on the part of DVLA.

Transdev were also running several marketing schemes to encourage people to return to the bus service, including the £1 evening fare promotion that FirstBus had discussed above, which was hoped to assist with the recovery of evening journeys relating to the hospitality sector. Free day tickets had also been issued over the Transdev mobile app to serve as a thank you for those who had been using the service as well as an encouragement for others to try it. A great deal of feedback had been received from these free journeys, with passengers reporting that the buses felt clean and safe.

Members questioned what arrangements had been made to provide alternative services for users whose journeys would be affected by the Morten Lane and Granby Lane bridge closures which were planned over the next year. The Transdev representative would provide further information on this after the meeting.

Northern

As described above, Northern's performance measures were currently generally strong. Passenger levels were at approximately 75% of what would be expected at this time of year pre-pandemic. However, it was noted that this recovery had primarily been in leisure travel, such as to the coast or to retail centres, with the traditional commute remaining low at close to 35% of pre-pandemic levels due to the shift toward working at home. Initiatives were in place to aim to raise patronage for the commute, such as a new flexible season ticket, though take-up had been limited. More general initiatives encouraging travel were also being used, such as a recent £1 ticket flash sale.

It was noted that although the driver shortages described by bus operators were not affecting the rail industry, pipeline issues had been caused by a period where training was unable to take place due to social distancing restrictions. However, work to ameliorate this such as the implementation of training bubbles had lessened the impact and these restrictions were now lifted, and it was expected that the availability of trained drivers would have fully caught up to standard levels by the end of Spring 2022.

A number of other points were raised:

- Neville Hill Depot was now being run solely by Northern, where it had previously been jointly managed with East Midlands Railway. This allowed strong opportunities in the management of services in the region, with benefits expected to be seen in the next few years.
- It was noted that mask use, though advised, was not compulsory on trains, and Northern staff could not enforce the wearing of masks.
- The December 2021 timetable for Bradford would soon come into use and would include increased frequency for the Halifax to Hull service, as well as an extra train from Leeds to Morecambe, bringing the timetable back to the pre-pandemic frequency of service.
- It was noted that Northern were working on a Community Rail Partnership on the Calder Valley Line, in conjunction with Calderdale Council and Rochdale Council.

Members thanked Northern for the installation of passenger toilets at Shipley station, and it was noted these were proving popular with rail users.

Members questioned all operators how the driver shortage was expected to impact on journeys over the Christmas period and whether contingency measures were in place to address this. Operators generally did not expect a very significant impact and noted that the closure of schools over Christmas would free up additional drivers. It was also typically expected for services to run at slightly reduced levels between Christmas and New Year. Operators would continue to work closely with the Combined Authority to flag up any arising issues and to best match available resources to demand.

Resolved: That the operators be thanked for their updates.

11. Workshop Session - Travel and Transport Post Pandemic

Members received a presentation on the impact of the pandemic on travel and transport in the region, and on plans for recovery and on the long-term impact

on travel behaviours, and were asked to consider three key questions:

- How has Covid changed your travel habits and perception of safety?
- What needs to happen to enable transport to support an economically sustainable recovery?
- How do we ensure transport options enable the widest range of people to be included in society?

Resolved: That the report be noted.