

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
LEEDS DISTRICT CONSULTATION SUB-COMMITTEE  
HELD ON MONDAY, 14 MARCH 2022 AT HELD AS A REMOTE  
MEETING**

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**Present:**

Councillor Colin Campbell	Leeds Council
Councillor Kim Groves	Transport Committee
Mark Parry (Deputy Chair)	Public Representative
Howard Dews (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Judith Rhodes (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Eric Smith (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Bill Tymms (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Leslie Webb (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Clive Woods (Public Representative)	Public Representative

**In attendance:**

Will Pearson	First Group
Andrew Bradley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

**40. Open Forum**

A query was raised regarding the availability of a database of bus cancellations to discover any potential patterns with a view to addressing them. Officers responded that operators have become better at recording cancellations in real time and informing passengers via appropriate means. Driver shortages are not as frequent as during the height of the pandemic but incidences still occur and operators are being impacted differently. Operators do record any cancelled services and share this information with the Combined Authority, and there are further avenues to be explored regarding sharing this information. Wherever services are cancelled, less frequent services are prioritised for staff cover.

It was raised that it has been difficult to keep track of changes to services made since as a result of the pandemic, and it was asked if there is a record of any such changes available to ensure all services are restored. Officers confirmed there is a record kept of changes to services, and though it is hoped that all services can be fully restored there are funding announcements due to be made in the Autumn of 2022 that may affect the levels of service that operators can provide. Regarding a list of services it was confirmed that operators are required to register any service changes publicly. There is also

an upcoming review of bus services which will inform the levels of funding provided by the Combined Authority to ensure that important bus services are not lost.

It was noted that there is a prevalence of North Yorkshire residents travelling to West Yorkshire stations for commuting due to factors including lower train fares and parking charges at these stations, and as a result increasing the congestion in these areas for local residents. Officers confirmed that there are park and ride schemes operating around the airport and train stations, for which the main aim is to discourage traffic from unnecessarily driving into the city centre. It is accepted that some users will travel from nearby authorities but the system overall reduces road traffic for everyone. There are some drawbacks of this including the amount of available parking, however the Combined Authority has commissioned a review of bus and rail park and ride services for West Yorkshire which should provide further insight into future developments.

Concerns were raised regarding errors in signage on the new bus maps including missing service routes and discrepancies with route names and assigned colours among other issues. It was queried how these points should be raised and how they will be addressed. Officers gave thanks for the feedback and acknowledged that even with the improvements made to the bus signage there will always be further issues to resolve. Officers requested any issues to be sent via email to an address provided to the members, so they can be addressed by the appropriate teams.

Concerns were raised regarding the proposed works for the Horsforth roundabout following a previous consultation. It was suggested the works will not improve the flow of traffic and will continue to cause congestion for car and bus passengers around the airport and lead to further cancellations of bus services due to unpredictable traffic conditions. Officers confirmed the works are going out for consultation, and all schemes aim towards improving the journey for buses and active travel users without additional capacity for cars. Proposals can be complex such as changing the way signals work for one part of a roundabout will improve the flow for the whole roundabout. Officers provided an email address and a link to Connecting Leeds to the meeting attendees to pass on any feedback, and encouraged both negative and positive feedback if improvements are made.

It was noted that work on the White Rose rail station is due to begin soon, and that Northern Powerhouse rail from Leeds to Manchester will use the line. It was queried if the extra demand has been accounted for in line with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Rail Vision target of four trains per hour. The plans for Thorpe Park station have a provision for increasing the number of tracks in future to meet demand, and it was questioned if the White Rose station has anything similar. Officers responded that the station is currently in the final stages of an agreement to begin work with the project delivered in three years' time. The initial aim was to work toward two trains per hour and at present that remains to be the case. There are still concerns regarding the levels of services offered by operators and how the changing commuting and leisure will affect demand, but the situation will be under constant review to ensure all users get most out of the railways and car traffic is reduced.

Operators added that the track towards the White Rose station location is located on a narrow embankment and could not be easily extended to accommodate four tracks, however the signalling is being upgraded as a part of the Transpennine Route Upgrade which should allow for more trains to use the existing tracks.

It was raised that Cottingley station is due to close due to a low demand. Officers responded that the new station will provide a safer and more accessible option, and the creation of a new station will increase awareness and options for local residents.

**41. Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Hayden, Cllr Cunningham, Brittany Stead, Linda Bishop

**42. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

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

**43. Exempt Information - Possible exclusion of the press and public**

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

**44. Notes of the informal meeting held on 11 October 2021**

Members noted the notes of the meeting held on 11 October 2021.

**45. Transport Committee Review**

Officers confirmed that as a part of the Transport Committee Review, the DCSCs will continue as a platform for members of the public to hear from officers and to provide input related to transport. The meetings will be chaired by an engagement lead from the Transport Committee, and the DCSC will no longer fall under the governance structure and so will be less formal. This should allow for more membership and a wider degree of potential consultation.

**46. Chair's Update**

There was no update from the Chair due to apologies.

**47. Information Report**

Members considered an information report which provided an update on transport issues in Leeds, including;

Leeds bus station and refurbishment  
Infirmary Street and park row  
Corn Exchange Scheme  
Leeds Rail Station and surrounding areas  
Connecting Leeds projects  
Leeds City centre cycle improvements – Dewsbury Road

**48. Operator Updates**

Members were provided with verbal updates from several transport operators:

Northern

Performance has been challenging due to staff shortages over winter, mostly

as a result of Covid-19 cases. There are also challenges caused by the inability to train for new drivers throughout 2020, and there is a backlog of training to deliver before new drivers can begin regular service. The drivers' union has also imposed a rest day working ban which is exacerbating the existing staff shortages though dialogue is ongoing to reach agreement between the operators and the union. As a result of shortages Northern is operating on a reduced timetable over the summer which has been shared with the Combined Authority.

Customer numbers are roughly 80% of pre covid figures, and new travelling trends are being observed. Season ticket holders are below 40% of what could have been expected pre-pandemic, caused by changes to regular working patterns and more working from home. Commuting patterns are now stronger in the middle of the week, with much higher leisure travel to retail destinations. It can expect to see more travel to typical outdoor and coastal destinations as the summer approaches.

Sales of advanced purchase tickets are approximately 150% higher compared to pre-pandemic figures, which allows for more effective planning of services. There have been no capacity issues so far, with the main Leeds-York line busy as well as Leeds-Nottingham, however the new trains have automatic counting technology to monitor capacity and further help to inform service provision.

It was asked if the Huddersfield-Castleford route will be restored, and if services will promote train journeys more widely. Operators confirmed the route will be restored, and will advertise to commuters to regain the interest that had been affected by the pandemic.

Positive feedback was provided on the work of converting trains to accommodate more bicycles, as well as for the new Northern website.

### TransPennine Express

Due to apologies, TransPennine offered to share an update note to DCSC members following the meeting.

### First Bus

First bus reported that lower staffing levels have led to some service reductions. Customer demand had reduced overall but the patterns are very different to the pre-pandemic landscape. There is a pipeline of recruitment for drivers wanting to join the bus industry, and licenses are being returned by the DVLA much faster now than during the pandemic. A number of vehicles are being converted to allow them to be used for training, and new training officers are being recruited to accelerate the process. Working arrangements are being reviewed to allow for more flexible working to make the role more appealing.

Passenger numbers are currently around 85% of pre-pandemic figures, which has risen from around 75% in previous months. Concessionary passengers are not returning as fast as other passenger types, and questions are being

asked around how they might be encouraged to return.

A new fare structure has been introduced to increase passenger options. Tap on tap off has been introduced to buses, with return tickets supported by the end of April. The Corporate Travel Club offer is also being reviewed to encourage business use with more flexible tickets.

First bus confirmed that fuel is hedged which covers any short term volatility in the price and the availability of fuel. Welcome the upcoming funding package and see where that goes.

The Temple Green park and ride extension is now complete and will hopefully encourage drivers to use it for their commutes instead. The site was very busy pre-pandemic so similar use can be expected to return.

The customer services live chat will be expanded with more hours to include evenings and weekends.

It was questioned when full services are due to be restored. First Bus responded that there has already been a bounce back recently but it would be difficult to predict a full return to service. The easing of pandemic restrictions is good news for services and passengers but comes with risks of more transmission and rising driver illnesses once more.

It was positively noted that the £1 fare after 7pm will continue, and it was suggested that it may be of benefit to begin the promotion at an earlier time to attract more passengers and include more events that travellers would be attending. It was also highlighted that some deals are not visibly advertised so travellers do not know they are available. It was raised that the cost of fares for short journeys tends to be expensive compared to other options such as Uber, and if there is any way to tackle that issue. First Bus responded that the evening offer is being reviewed and more decisions will be made based on the customer use. More can also be done to promote the available deals, and this will be fed back to the appropriate teams.

It was questioned if the rising cost of petrol and living in general will be encourage higher public transport use. First Bus responded that the issue has been discussed internally, and particularly noted that there is a generation of young people beginning to enter the work force who will be most affected by cost of living, and public transport should be aiming to support them by offering an attractive alternative to car travel for commuting.

### Arriva

Arriva reported passenger levels of 84% compared to pre-pandemic figures. There are still issues regarding driver shortages, though recruitment campaigns are ongoing to attract new drivers through the new West Yorkshire Bus Jobs website. Arriva is also working with DVLA to fast track new licenses, and drivers with existing PCV license holders are beginning on a higher pay to encourage applications.

The decision to change Crown Point Road into a single lane with speed

bumps will strongly affect bus passengers on what is one of the busiest routes into Leeds. Services have been diverted away from Crown Point Road and Leeds City College as a result. Arriva is campaigning to Leeds City Council to make amendments to Black Bull Street to allow service to the college again.

It was questioned if the withdrawn X25 service is a temporary or permanent decision, Arriva confirmed that it is permanent, and offered to assist with finding alternative services if needed outside of the meeting.

#### **49. Transport Programmes: A Look Ahead**

The Sub-Committee was shown a presentation to outline the proposed goals for public transport over the coming years.

It was asked how projects are prioritised, and how the order is determined. Officers responded that a cost to benefit analysis takes place which considers many factors including how many people will benefit, who will benefit, which type of travel is encouraged, how much disruption is caused, the time the project will take, and the availability of the land among many other factors. The funding source can impact the types of projects that can go ahead as it may limit the types of projects that are eligible.

It was queried where project suggestions come from. Officers responded that there is a portal on the Connecting Leeds website for anyone to input ideas and comments. Ward members and officers also have a strong input, and collaborative working often identifies more issues than may have been identified at first.

It was questioned how the list of upcoming WYCA projects relate to other authorities' lists of projects. Officers confirmed that all of the funding comes through WYCA. There are a variety of pots such as West Yorkshire Transport Fund and Transforming Cities Fund. WYCA has oversight but each fund has a directive from the Department for Transport about which projects are eligible and so projects can be identified regionally.

#### **50. Public Transport After the Pandemic**

The Sub-Committee was given an update on the current trends for public transport following the pandemic, and were encouraged to suggest ideas to encourage passengers to return to public transport, and how public transport might change to support a return. The following points were raised:

The rising cost of fuel coupled with the reduction of wear and tear are strong arguments to encourage modal shift towards buses. The Combined Authority is awaiting the outcome of the Bus Service Improvement Plan bid which will provide funding to improve the service in general despite a reduction of 50% of the available funding to £1.5 billion. The BSIP will provide an opportunity to review fares and service frequencies.

In West Yorkshire both bus and rail passengers are returning faster than other areas of the country, and there are many small changes that can be made. There is more work to do on signalling to improve traffic flow.

By working together with operators to improve the marketing it will encourage

more young people to use the buses. There should be attractive offers available or else people will continue to use cars over public transport.

Messaging should be made clearer that public transport reduces the amount of vehicles on the road, which in turn reduces congestion along with carbon emissions. All authorities are targeting a reduction in car use especially within the centres, but as more houses are built more cars and roads are introduced so services must be reliable.

More should be done to reduce the amount of carbon in schemes, in terms of cars but also when infrastructure is built. Carbon reduction is already included as a part of all WYCA schemes, though it is still early and more data will help to strengthen the argument more widely.

Public transport should be incorporated into all new residential and commercial schemes so the users are better served from the outset. This will require close work with operators to examine existing services and design new ways to ensure all needs are met. There are already examples of new commercial developments that have in turn created new services in this way. It was noted that developers should also be involved to ensure new roads are suitable, and should be held to any provisions that are promised.

Highways England had consulted on improvements to the Lofthouse interchange with three options to varying levels. The outcome was that 84% of people favoured a 'full works' option but there were no costings provided. It was asked if there is dialogue between WYCA, Councils, and Highways England for similar schemes. Officers confirmed that dialogue does take place and Councils and authorities are able to provide feedback as necessary.

More bus priority is needed to make journeys quicker by bus than by car. Existing routes should be re-examined to determine where more priority can be placed to reduce journey times.