

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON FRIDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2023 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1,  
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS**

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**Present:**

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Chair)	Bradford Council
Councillor Peter Carlill (Deputy Chair)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Manisha Roma Kaushik (Deputy Chair)	Kirklees Council
Councillor Peter Clarke	Bradford Council
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw	Bradford Council
Councillor Taj Salam (Transport Engagement Lead)	Bradford Council
Councillor Peter Caffrey	Calderdale Council
Councillor Colin Hutchinson (Transport Engagement Lead)	Calderdale Council
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Councillor Martyn Bolt	Kirklees Council
Councillor Eric Firth	Kirklees Council
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin	Kirklees Council
Councillor Annie Maloney	Leeds City Council
Councillor Eleanor Thomson	Leeds City Council
Councillor Izaak Wilson (Transport Engagement Lead)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Melanie Jones	Wakefield Council
Councillor Kevin Swift (Transport Engagement Lead)	Wakefield Council

**In attendance:**

Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Haskins	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Rachel Jones	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Emma Longbottom	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

**48. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Amir Hussain, Cllr Buckley, Cllr Butt, Cllr D'Agorne, Cllr Hayden, and Cllr Khan

**49. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

**50. Exempt information - possible exclusion of the press and public**

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

**51. Minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 14 December 2022**

Members requested an update regarding if the Chair had received a response from the secretary of state regarding staffing levels in train stations, as was requested at the previous meeting. The Chair confirmed no response has yet been received, and the matter will be followed further.

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 14 December 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair.

**52. Bus Service Funding and Network Plan Development Update**

Members received a report providing an update on current issues affecting bus services in West Yorkshire and the actions to be taken to mitigate these risks and issues in 2023/24.

Officers noted that as of the present meeting, the government bus recovery grant funding is due to end on 31 March 2023 with no further arrangements announced. Bus operators are required to register any changes to services by Friday 17 February, and have identified cuts to services which are outlined in the report, though are still only the expected outcomes until the changes are confirmed. Discussions are being held between the Combined Authority and bus operators to assess the impact and address future concerns, and the Mayor alongside the other Northern Mayors continue to urge the government for longer term sustainable funding. Members requested to see the full list of affected routes once it has been finalised.

The Combined Authority's budget is challenged by inflation, requiring rearranging some funding to cover shortages. The transport levy has been frozen for local authorities, however the costs for operators have risen since previous contracts were agreed, and so potential contract renewals are much more expensive. The Combined Authority is seeking value for money and services which deliver for communities, and so it may be necessary to investigate potential funding options and to review the terms of future arrangements. A potential option is to utilise some of the BSIP funding allocation to stabilise the network, with longer-term arrangements to be agreed with members and partners.

Members raised concerns about the withdrawal of services, as well as the lack of clear planning from the government which has left bus operators in a difficult position. The reduction in services is contrary to the ambitions of the region, and members noted that reliable transport is essential to maintain a strong local economy. Officers noted that it is likely that the government will make any announcements in the context of the Spring budget. The

conversations will happen in March however the issue of bus funding requires sooner resolution. The Combined Authority and bus operators are working on the assumption of no further funding. Members raised concerns that even if government funding is announced before the cut-off date there will be little time for operators to plan accordingly.

Members noted that the Mayor's Fares scheme has catalysed an increase in passengers over the last quarter, and that among some demographic there are more day passes being sold than before the pandemic. Cuts will have an impact on communities and also on workers whose jobs may be at risk. Members noted that the services that are cut are likely to affect more isolated communities hardest, and many jobs are 24/7 including healthcare. It is important for operators to have stability so they can attract new drivers, otherwise there is a risk that the service quality will suffer. Members noted that bus networks in other cities have been able to recover their patronage to pre-pandemic levels and even higher in some cases, and so it is clear it is possible with the correct funding and approach.

Members queried if there are any smaller operators seeking to enter the supply chain and fill some of the gaps in service. Officers noted there are fewer in the market due to the lower confidence in the market. Smaller operators are more susceptible to changes in the price of fuel and other price rises. The lower availability of drivers and staff means recruitment is more difficult and so illnesses have a larger impact on service provision. The market used to be attractive to smaller operators as the contract provided stability and flexibility which is now no longer the case. The Combined Authority has adapted its tenders to be more attractive for smaller operators however these have failed to attract appropriate bids.

Members noted that bus operators run fewer buses than they previously would have, which means less cover when vehicles break down. It is more viable to sell a vehicle for a discontinued route, which in turn makes it even more difficult to re-introduce new services quickly. Smaller operators cannot afford to compete with larger operators, and private companies are still aiming for profit more than reliable service.

**Resolved:**

That the actions being taken to manage bus service costs in 2023/24 be noted.

That the general approach to the deployment of funds set aside in the Bus Service Improvement Plan award for bus network development be endorsed, and that a Strategic Outline Case be presented to the Committee seeking approval to spend.

**53. The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the Mayor's Big Bus Chat update**

Members received a report providing an update on the outcome of the first three months of the Mayor's Fares initiative and the next steps for development and delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The

report also sets out the high-level findings of the Mayor's Big Bus Chat public engagement to inform ongoing delivery of the BSIP.

Officers noted that initial data interpretations have been made using the first three months of data from the Mayor's Fares scheme. The data suggests growth in patronage in the final quarter of 2022 and a saving of approximately £3.6 million for bus passengers in that time. Changes to commuting patterns have also been identified, and fewer season tickets are being sold for daily travel.

The Mayor's Big Bus Chat public engagement was carried out between July and September 2022. Details are currently being finalised and will be published on the Combined Authority website within the coming weeks. Headline results validate the current direction of the Bus Service Improvement Plan. Key themes suggest communities want to protect their existing services, and support bus priority.

Members queried if the customer charter being created in conjunction with operators will have measurable outcomes, officers offered to follow the issue in more detail at the next meeting. Most of the criteria to be monitored are in line with BSIP, such as reliability and punctuality.

Members questioned how the passenger experience at bus stops can be improved, particularly regarding accessibility, the ongoing issue of ghost buses and the lack of clear information about how to submit complaints. Officers responded that many issues around bus stops are local to the immediate area and so can be addressed at the local level. Regarding ghost buses there are ongoing conversations with operators to ensure that the data used by real time information systems is as accurate as possible. Lots of resources have been and are being utilised to address this issue but there may still be imperfections along the way. A workshop on the ghost bus issue will be organised so it may be discussed in greater detail. Regarding the visibility of complaints information there is a need to balance operator accountability without putting passengers off from using buses in the future.

Members raised concerns that the bus network will never return to sustainable levels, owing to continued reductions in services and lower passenger numbers. Members noted that the issue is not exclusive to West Yorkshire, and longer-term planning can only be accomplished with more sustainability from the government.

Members raised concerns about the lack of integration for journeys, such as Leeds bus station having no car drop-off location and the banning of e-scooters from buses.

There are further issues about the lack of mobile connectivity in rural areas which also have fewer real-time information systems at bus stops. Members noted that there is much work being undertaken to reduce car traffic into the centre and to improve the reliability of buses in general. E-scooters are currently not road legal and so there is a grey area about allowing them on buses until further guidance is released. Officers noted that the Transforming Cities Fund should introduce more information screens in rural areas.

**Resolved:** That the early findings from the Mayor's Big Bus Chat survey and the progress being made on delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan be noted.

#### **54. West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan Update**

Members received a report outlining the strategic approach and key messages for the development of the new Mayor's West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan, and to provide an update on the Department for Transport's consultation on Local Transport Plan (LTP) guidance.

Officers noted the Local Transport Plan is required to be updated every five years. The plan sets out how the Combined Authority will meet its objectives, how schemes are prioritised, and funds are allocated. The Department for Transport issues guidance for LTPs, however the most recent expected guidance has not yet been published, which has resulted in some ambiguity regarding compliance. The delay will cause further issues with the Plan publication deadline of early 2024 since public consultation is required, however progress will continue as appropriate.

There is further work ongoing regarding mass transit, which is a key area to improve productivity for the region and further develop active travel and bus priority. Equality remains at the forefront of the Local Transport Plan, and will empower local communities. Consultation with communities will be undertaken over March and April 2023 and further updates provided to members.

Members noted that the delays and uncertainty from the central government is hindering the region and causing confusion among their constituents. Officers noted that work is progressing as much as possible and updates will be regularly presented to members.

**Resolved:**

That the delay to the DfT's consultation on new guidance for Local Transport Plans and the implications that this has on delivering an updated West Yorkshire LTP by early 2024 be noted.

The development of a new Mayor's West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan based on the emerging overarching narrative, vision and ambitions presented within this report be approved.

The development of a new Mayor's West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan in line with the West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan target of net zero by 2038 be approved.

#### **55. West Yorkshire Plan**

Members received a report to provide an overview of progress on the development of a West Yorkshire Plan and its fit with the wider policy framework of the Combined Authority.

Officers noted the West Yorkshire plan has been drafted in conjunction with

local authority colleagues and partners. The plan will provide a narrative framework of the West Yorkshire region, detailing the key aims and the trajectory of the region leading up to 2040, and provide clarity for stakeholders and external organisations. The West Yorkshire plan has been presented to all of the Combined Authority thematic committees for their feedback, and will be approved for publication at the Combined Authority meeting on 16 March 2023. Officers welcomed any feedback from the Transport Committee members, and noted that the final draft will be circulated to all committee members before the Combined Authority meeting.

**Resolved:** That the draft of the vision and narrative of the plan be considered, and the proposed next steps be agreed, with a particular focus on content, language used, and anything missing or which needs to be removed.

## 56. Transport Policy Update

Members received a report providing a quarterly update on relevant transport policy developments.

Officers noted the Transport for the North Board met in December 2022 and will next meet on 23 March 2023. The outcomes of the meeting have been included for reference and any feedback is welcomed.

The Transpennine Route Upgrade continues and will bring benefits across West Yorkshire. A briefing was held with members on 3 February 2023 to provide a progress update. Work will take place at Morley station between 4 and 12 February which will disrupt services between Leeds and Huddersfield. More works will be undertaken at Stalybridge station on the three consecutive weekends beginning on 18/19 February 2023.

A draft of the West Yorkshire Rail Strategy has been shared with members. Public consultation will be conducted later in the year.

The Combined Authority has been provisionally successful in its Levelling Up Fund bid, with the total package of £47.25 million. The Government expects all funding to be allocated by 31 March 2025. Multiple schemes will be delivered including two bus priority corridor schemes, along with a variety of further improvements to bus infrastructure. The funding will be delivered alongside existing City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and Transforming Cities Fund programmes.

Members queried if modifications at bus stops are included in the scope of improvements, officers responded that they can be, however with over 500 stops across West Yorkshire there would need to be some criteria set to determine which improvements can be made.

Members questioned how they might engage with the process and who determines which schemes are included, officers answered that confirmation is being awaited from the Department for Transport, however it is hoped the decisions can be made locally where ward members can be involved.

Members noted that there is some disparity between the locations of potential

schemes, the Chair noted that many schemes had been unsuccessful and the outcome does not meet the expectations or needs of the region, but work will continue across West Yorkshire with the available funding and members will be involved in the relevant discussions.

**Resolved:** That the updates provided in the report be noted.

#### **57. Active Travel Fund 4 - Bid Composition**

Members received a report providing an overview of Active Travel Fund 4 and the proposed approach to the submission of a West Yorkshire bid for funding. The report also requests approval for delegated authority for approval of the final bid document to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Transport Committee.

Officers noted that the Combined Authority was invited to submit a bid on 10 January 2023, with a deadline of 24 February 2023. A longlist of potential bids has been put together with oversight from Active Travel England, with the bids assessed on a number of criteria including value for money, quality, and deliverability among others. The indicative allocation for West Yorkshire is between £11 million and £13 million, however the Combined Authority has been encouraged to oversubscribe due to its high proportion of suitable bids. Any approved schemes should be in construction by March 2024, and schemes have been identified in partnership with each local authority.

Members noted there had been a detailed conversation on this topic recently and there is much agreement on the positive outcomes on offer. Members requested that transport portfolio holders are kept informed and can review the final list of schemes prior to submission.

**Resolved:**

That approval be given to the Combined Authority submitting a bid for Active Travel Fund 4, as set out in the approach outlined in this report.

That final approval of the bid to submit to ATF4 on behalf of the Combined Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair.