

Bus Information Strategy 2019-24

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Draft strategy issued for stakeholder engagement



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Bus Information Strategy 2019-24

1. Bus Information Strategy

This strategy sets out the arrangements for providing information on bus services in accordance with section 130 of the Transport Act 2000.

2. Introduction to West Yorkshire Combined Authority

West Yorkshire Combined Authority covers the 10 districts of Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Harrogate, Kirklees, Leeds, Selby, Wakefield and York – an area known collectively as Leeds City Region. The Combined Authority is the Local transport Authority (LTA) for West Yorkshire, including Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

We work in partnership with local councils and businesses to ensure that everyone in our region benefits from a strong, successful economy and a modern, accessible transport network.

By championing the region's interests nationally and internationally we secure investment to deliver better transport and housing, help businesses to grow and create jobs.

We focus on:

- Inclusive growth – ensuring that economic growth leads to opportunities for all who live and work in our region to prosper;
- Productivity – helping businesses to grow;
- 21st Century transport – creating modern, efficient transport infrastructure; and
- Devolution – securing funding and powers to help us do even more.

We work closely with the private sector through the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to ensure that our work meets the needs of employers in the region. We also operate the Metro network of bus stations, travel centres and public transport information in West Yorkshire.

The Combined Authority (CA) works closely with the West Yorkshire Ticketing Company Ltd (WYTCL) to develop the MCard multi operator ticketing offer in West Yorkshire. WYTCL is a Joint Venture Company owned by the bus and rail operators of West Yorkshire and the Combined Authority. WYTCL establishes the ticket products, price, promotion, retail activity and the distribution of sales revenue as prescribed in the Joint Venture Agreement between its members (including the Combined Authority). WYTCL have developed the MCard strategy and plan 2019- 2021 which sets out the key strategic objectives and projects to deliver the objectives. Key objectives include:

- Increase patronage
- Be smart- convert remaining paper tickets to smart tickets
- Stimulate off bus pre-payment with an enhanced retail network and flexible payment options

3. Local context and scope of this strategy

The way in which people travel is changing. Over the past five years there has been a change in the bus travel trends which has included growth in the journeys made by young people, set against an overall decline in levels of bus patronage and a 96% increase in rail travel over the period 2004/5 – 2014/15¹. How people wish to pay for travel and consume information is changing too. The West Yorkshire Tracker survey has shown that more people than ever before own a smartphone and use it to access internet content – in West Yorkshire all respondents to the survey aged 16-44 had access to a mobile phone and about 95% had internet access via a mobile phone².

Consumer technology is moving at pace and this strategy aims to modernise the information offer to meet increasing customer demands with the online offer becoming the 'new normal'. The pace of change will never be this slow again, consumer devices will become increasingly powerful, which provides opportunities to supply enhancements such as 'habit aware' departure information in a similar fashion to the information provided for car users. Smartphones are able to understand the regular travel habits of consumers and push information about their car journeys to and from regular locations such as home and work and offer journey time predictions and disruption information un-prompted by the user. This offer needs to be expanded to bus users so they receive automated information about their regular journeys.

Ongoing developments in this space will facilitate the supply of customised information to keep customers informed about their journey before they ask the question. We aim to 'remove the thinking' for customers by making information simple, easy, quick and comparative to the ease of use of travel information for other modes. Although this strategy sets out the direction of travel over the next five years, it will evolve and adapt as ongoing technical developments arrive on the market and will require the strategy to be under constant review.

The Bus Information Strategy 2019-24 seeks to build upon the significant progress of the 2012-17 Bus Information Strategy that sought to encourage the use of self-serve options for customers obtaining journey information while ensuring the provision of information via traditional sources for those who still required them. It sits alongside the Digital Payment for Travel Strategy.

This strategy has been developed to support the Combined Authority's vision for buses outlined in the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy 2040, which aims – 'To create a modern, integrated and innovative bus system, which puts customers first and contributes to the delivery of the economic, environmental and quality of life ambitions as set out in the Strategic Economic Plan and the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy.

The West Yorkshire Bus Strategy has set the ambitious target to grow the number of bus passengers by up to 25% over the next ten years. The Bus Information Strategy will contribute to this by providing the blueprint for the provision of easily accessible, reliable, dynamic and 'always live' travel information that facilitates patronage growth.

¹ West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040

² West Yorkshire Tracker Survey

The aims of the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme to double bus patronage in the city in the next 10 years have also been a major consideration in determining the focus of the strategy and associated outputs. Recognising the need to resonate with a new age of customer who have increasing demands from the products and services they consume.

Whilst the proposed strategy fulfils an obligation with regard to bus information, it is important that activities to deliver it are undertaken within a wider provision of travel information across all modes. For example information on line journey planning tools should enable customers to choose between the full range of options available for their journey walking, cycling, bus rail and road. Similarly bus and rail information should enable people to plan a journey using both modes.

4. Regional context

The Combined Authority is working in partnership with Transport for the North and Local Authorities across a pan-northern geography on the development of disruption and fares information to enhance the level of information provided. This will enable customers to plan a journey and identify the fare they will be charged. The provision of disruption information, will further enhance the 'always-live' aspirations of the strategy by keeping customers updated about disruptions to their journey. The Combined Authority manages the digital infrastructure for real time bus information on behalf of South Yorkshire and York.

5. Key objectives for the Bus Information Strategy

In order to achieve the ambitious targets the Combined Authority and partners have set, a new generation of customers need to be attracted to use public transport and information is one of the key components to attract new users through the provision of dynamic 'always-live' information via a range of channels that makes public transport the obvious choice. We must endeavour to replicate and enhance the other services they consume online. The key objectives/principles of the information strategy are:

1. **Digital First** – focus delivery to mobile devices
2. **Always Live** – up to date information on the move
3. **Customer driven** – the customer selects the information they need
4. **Network-wide** – fixed information at stops and interchanges
5. **Inclusive** – everyone has access according to need and requirement.
6. **Cost-effective** – for the local taxpayer

6. Considerations for the Bus Information Strategy 2019-24

In developing the Bus Information Strategy 2019-24 a number of considerations have been made to establish the direction of travel.

- The internet is increasingly becoming the first place people go to find out about bus information.
- Information is a major factor in growing bus use.
- Young people have been identified as the growth market – the offer needs to be centred around them.
- Public funding for bus information is limited – we need to be innovative to reach customers via cost effective channels – online/smartphone enable this.

- The emerging Bus Alliance presents the opportunity for reviewing activities and cost sharing agreements with operators.
- The Combined Authority and bus operators will need to provide for those who are not able to interact with digital information enabling them to access the information they need via a cost-effective solution.
- Adapting the provision of information to bus passengers to meet changing demand requires the Combined Authority to re assess its role in delivering information to the customer. Under the previous strategy the ITA/Metro was the major provider of information services. The new strategy will place the promotion of services and products with the bus operator with the Combined Authority ensuring a network wide availability of information and, as digital becomes the primary means of delivery, curating the data necessary for delivery by other parties. The Combined Authority will need to play a co-ordinating role as the provision of travel advice in times of disruption becoming increasingly important.

7. What have we done over the last five years?

A number of enhancements have been delivered as a result of the previous Bus Information Strategy that have improved the information offering for passengers and have demonstrated a predicted shift to digital channels. This has been delivered at a reduced operating cost for the taxpayer and increased the amount of information being consumed by customers while maintaining overall customer satisfaction.

| Improvement | |
|-------------------|--|
| Webchat | Webchat was introduced within the Metroline contact centre in 2015 offering customers the opportunity to chat with customer service advisors via the website to obtain the information they required. The introduction of webchat facilitates a self-service culture as agents are able to demonstrate where on the website information can be obtained with the aim of encouraging future un-aided use of the site. Metroline handle over 11,000 webchats per year, which facilitates future self-service as customers are assisted around the website. This approach has proven to be fruitful with increasing numbers visiting the website and over 650,000 timetable downloads taking place every month. |
| Social Media | Use of social media was in its infancy at the production of the previous Bus Information Strategy boasting 6,000 followers across the Twitter and Facebook platforms. Now in its eighth year of operation, social media is a key element of the service offering real time information about planned and un-planned disruption to the network. A co-ordinated approach with operators and partners has been established to disseminate and amplify information to ensure maximum reach to passengers. Our social media platforms now have c. 40,000 engaged followers. |
| Website | The Metro website was constructed in a 'responsive design template', which enabled the automatic scaling of the site across all devices. Research in the production of the previous strategy had predicted that the majority of interactions would be via mobile devices. There are over 800,000 user sessions every month on the site, with over 60% of traffic to wymetro.com is via mobile devices. The website was also moved to a more secure hosting environment to improve stability during periods of high demand such as bad weather/severe disruption. |
| Online timetables | Development work was carried out to present timetables on the website in XML format to make viewing easier for customers using mobile devices to |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Improvement | |
| | view timetables. Over 650,000 timetables are viewed via the website every month. This figure has increased as the provision of paper timetables has decreased showing a direct correlation between availability of the outputs. |
| Journey Planner | A new journey planner was introduced incorporating mapping information, which has enhanced the provision of information via this channel. Approximately 50% of visitors to the website use the journey planner. |
| Disruption Information | More effective use of the website, social media and Real Time screens to present disruption information has increased the reach of key service information that has enabled customers to keep informed. |
| Open data | The combined Authority has made timetable and real time information available via national open data sources that is being used by third party apps to provide customers with service information. Real Time information processed by the Combined Authority is viewed via third party applications over four million times every month. This approach has enabled apps to be developed and made available to customers at no additional cost to the taxpayer or resource from the Combined Authority. |
| QR codes/NFC tags | All c. 14,000 stops and shelters within West Yorkshire have had a QR code/NFC tag installed at every stop, which enables customers to access Real Time information for their stop. To date over two million scans have been recorded with over 90,000 being recorded every single month. |
| Information at every stop | Printed information has been installed and maintained at all c. 14,000 stops and shelters. It was previously only displayed at 4,000 shelters. |
| Information Points | 6 Self-service information points have been installed at 6 stations, which enable customers to plan journeys, access service and timetable information via a touch screen. |

8. How have we performed alongside Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set in the previous strategy?

Performance is monitored via the annual Tracker survey.

Awareness - Although awareness of key digital channels has increased, most notably of the Metro website, there is potential for further awareness to be generated of real time information both online and via smartphone.

Usage – traditional information sources have reduced in usage, most significantly in the use of the Metroline contact centre. *Usage of Real Time Information via smartphone shows a perceived drop in usage in 2017 recording 8.9%. However, in 2016 it was reported that 17.9% usage and the actual usage stats from the real time system show the data is accessed over 3 million times every month.

Performance – significant increase in satisfaction for Real Time via Smartphone and Travel Centres. Reduced satisfaction around information at bus stops. Intelligence suggests that concerns over the speed of change of information following service changes and presentation. New design Roadside Displays are being produced as part of the Bus 18 initiative.

| | 2011 position | 2017 target | 2017 actual |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Awareness (% of population) | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Metro website | 61.6% | 75% | 75.7% |
| Metroline | 50.0% | 65% | 49% |
| Real Time Information via Internet | 25.4% | 50% | 38.7% |
| Real Time Information via Smartphone | 13.5% | 50% | 40.4% |
| | | | |
| | 2011 position | 2017 target | 2017 actual |
| Usage - frequent or occasional (% of population) | | | |
| Metro/operator websites | 34.6% | 50% | 51.8% |
| MetroLine | 13.7% | 20% | 5.3% |
| Pocket timetables | 32% | 20% | 26.9% |
| Real Time Information via Smartphone | 12.1% | 20% | 8.9%* |
| | | | |
| | 2011 position | 2017 target | 2017 actual |
| Performance (on 1 – 10 scale) | | | |
| Bus Station displays | 7.8 | 8.2 | 7.7 |
| Metroline | 7.7 | 8.2 | 7.7 |
| Travel Centres | 6.8 | 8.0 | 7.7 |
| Displays at bus stops | 8.1 | 8.5 | 7.3 |
| RTI Smartphone | 4.4 | 7.5 | 8.0 |

9. What's in the current provision and where do we go next?

| Channel | Current provision | Who's responsible | Action | Where next |
|--|--|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| Digital/'Always live' Information Outputs | | | | |
| WY Metro website | Website available 24/7 offering stop level real time information, timetables and journey planning software. Webchat enquiry service available. | Combined Authority | Enhance | Review journey planner requirements and implement a cost-effective solution at reduced cost to the Combined Authority. Signpost to information about fares and ticketing products. |
| Social media | Service information and custom assistance via twitter and facebook provided between 07:00 – 20:00 | Combined Authority | Enhance | Ongoing use/promotion of social media to disseminate live information. |
| Real Time Information via Smartphone and web | Real Time data processed by the Combined Authority is available via website and data made open to be used via third party smartphone apps. | Combined Authority | Enhance and promote | Explore efficiencies in the processing and delivery of real time information and promote the availability of the information. |
| Real Time Information via text | Real time information is available to customers via text message upon request. | Combined Authority | Phase-out | Ongoing monitoring of the channel with a view to removing the output as customers migrate to access information via more cost-effective channels. Promotion of 'free always-live' information via web and smartphone apps to reduce the cost for customers. |
| Metro Messenger | e-newsletter providing travel and service change | Combined Authority | Maintain | Ongoing use to provide travel and service change information |

| Channel | Current provision | Who's responsible | Action | Where next |
|---|--|----------------------------------|------------|---|
| | information and Combined Authority updates. | | | and Combined Authority updates. |
| On the Network | | | | |
| Roadside displays (timetables at bus stops) | Timetable information is available at all 14,000 bus stops and shelters across the network. | Combined Authority | Transform | Information at stops will be made available appropriate to the level of service operating. An approach will be explored to reduce the frequency of posting. |
| QR Codes/NFC tags | Cards have been installed at all 14,000 stops and shelters across West Yorkshire enabling stop-specific real time information on smartphone. | Combined Authority | Promote | Ongoing promotion to encourage increased use to access 'always-live' information. An increase in prominence as approach to provision of roadside displays changes. |
| Real Time Information at stops | There are currently 1,050 screens at stops throughout West Yorkshire providing real time bus information. | Combined Authority | Enhance | A further 1,000 screens are being introduced in the Leeds district as part of the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme. Alternative options for powering screens will be explored. |
| Network-wide information | Wayfinding and mapping information made available at key hubs and interchanges | Combined Authority | Enhance | Mapping outputs will relate to the emerging key network legibility system. Maps will be made available across the network and online with print at home capability. |
| Print | | | | |
| Pocket timetable booklets | Timetable booklets are printed at each time a bus service is changed | Operators and Combined Authority | Scale back | The current mass production and distribution by the Combined Authority of printed timetable booklets at each |

| Channel | Current provision | Who's responsible | Action | Where next |
|--|--|---|-----------|--|
| | | | | <p>service change will cease in 2020. A baseline provision whereby a current printed bus timetable will be available on demand.</p> <p>The production and distribution of printed material promoting bus services will be the responsibility of bus operators who may provide this directly or commission material from the Combined Authority.</p> |
| Ticket and price list leaflets | A suite of printed information is produced to promote concessionary/pre-paid tickets | West Yorkshire Ticketing Company & Combined Authority | Reduce | The Combined Authority will produce information under the direction of the West Yorkshire Ticketing Company. |
| Face-to-face Information Services | | | | |
| Travel Centres | The Combined Authority provide Travel Centres in Bradford, Castleford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Leeds and Pontefract. On behalf of the Combined Authority, Arriva operate Dewsbury and Wakefield Travel Centres and Transdev operates Keighley. Travel centres provide face-to-face and printed information and ticketing retailing. | Combined Authority & Operators | Transform | <p>Travel Centres are going to be transformed. The aim is to provide a service aligned with the modern high street bank model, which provides a range of self-serve and face-to-face options designed to provide an efficient service to all customers.</p> <p>Customers will use self-service machines with personal assistance available. Printed information will be available on demand.</p> |
| Metroline | The Metroline call centre has evolved into a multi-channel | Combined Authority | Maintain | Ongoing monitoring and a review of standards will be |

| Channel | Current provision | Who's responsible | Action | Where next |
|--|--|---|----------|---|
| | contact centre offering customer service/information via webchat, social media and email in addition to calls. The service is operational 07:00 – 20:00 seven days a week. | | | undertaken to make sure service provision meets customer expectations |
| Digital, Information Assets | | | | |
| CoSA – Combined Services and Assets Database | GIS system storing current bus timetable data and bus stop assets. Outputs timetable data to Journey Planner, Traveline and other API's. Output to create print and network Information at bus stops and interchanges. | Combined Authority | Maintain | Seek to reduce data processing and validation costs through automation and data quality initiatives with operators. |
| Real Time Bus Information | Processes bus timetable data and automatic vehicle location data to output predicted arrival times to customers through signs and online services. | Combined Authority/Operators Combined Authority manages this on behalf of South Yorkshire and York | Maintain | Procure new service contract from 2021/22 seeking to improve accuracy at a reduced cost to the tax payer. |

10. What we will do and when

| | Year one - Transition | Year two –three Transform | Year four-five Review |
|--|---|--|---|
| Digital | Consider linking to customers on wymetro.com to third party journey planner tools (eg Traveline or Google) rather than the current bespoke tool. | Increase provision of real time information and promote the availability of 'always-live' digital information via multiple channels. | Maintain awareness of developments in customer technology and how information may be enhanced through the use of this technology. |
| On the Network | Adopt a new approach to signposting people to bus services initially in Leeds funded through Connecting Leeds but extended to other towns and cities. Tailor the provision of information provided at bus stops to customer need. | Implement new approach to on-street information. | Ensure the provision of information across the network is meeting the needs of users. |
| Face-to-face | Refurbishment of Travel Centres to adopt the self-service approach used in retail banking | Introduce new Travel Centre model at stations where funding identified, establish business cases for remaining. | Introduce new Travel Centre model at all Travel Centres across the estate. |
| Print | Gradual withdrawal of mass printed output, introduce print-on-demand solution. | Timetable booklets for individual services to be bus operators' responsibility with the Combined Authority providing network wide printed information. | Print on-demand and at operator request to promote key services. |
| Constant review of strategy as technical developments enter the market | | | |



Find out more

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