

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 15 January 2021

Subject: **COVID-19 Impacts and Recovery**

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	

- 1.1 To provide an update on the current impacts of COVID on transport and on the actions set out in the Transport Recovery Plan that was endorsed at the Combined Authority in July 2020.

COVID-19 Transport Recovery Plan

- 2.1 A Transport Recovery Plan has been created to draw together in one place the role of transport through the restart and into recovery and what is needed to ensure transport can effectively and efficiency perform that role. The Transport Recovery Plan sits alongside a wider Economic Recovery Plan. Delivery of the Transport Recovery Plan will be overseen by Transport Committee; the Chair of the Transport Committee will report progress to the Combined Authority's Economic Recovery Board.
- 2.2 The plan was adopted at the Combined Authority on the 27th July 2020, see **Background Documents**. This sets out the actions we are already taking and would take if further funding were released from Government.
- 2.3 This report sets out the current position regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on the transport system and progress with early actions in the Recovery Plans.

Travel Advice

- 2.4 Following the introduction of “lockdown” restrictions in the Prime Minister’s announcement on 4 January, the travel guidance issued by the Combined Authority is currently as follows in line with Government guidance;
- People can still travel for work (where you cannot reasonably work from home), education, health and caring purposes, to visit your support bubble, attend medical appointments, shopping for essentials, for outdoor exercise and for animal care.
 - If you need to travel you should stay local – meaning avoiding travelling outside of your village, town or the part of a city where you live – and look to reduce the number of journeys you make overall.
 - Public transport is available for those who need it but capacity is limited to maintain social distancing. We ask that passengers allow extra time, consider the time of day they travel, follow social distancing guidelines, wear a face covering and check their journey before setting off.
 - Avoid sharing cars with people from other households (outside your support bubble) and where it is unavoidable, all travellers should wear a face covering and ensure good ventilation.
 - Cycling and walking journeys should be considered if it is possible to do so.
- 2.5 Public transport has been maintained to support essential journeys as the Government guidance allows for travelling to work, education, medical appointments, and other prescribed reasons. It is essential to enable critical workers to get to work as there are more workplaces open than in the spring lockdown. Many schools are remaining open for vulnerable children and those of critical workers. A process of is underway of assessing bus and rail services to ensure they are meeting the reduced demand. Central and Local Government is currently funding the provision and it is prudent to ensure no over provision or inefficiency. This may result in short term adjustments to service levels during the lockdown restrictions.
- 2.6 With regard to the Combined Authority’s Transport Services;
- Bus Stations will remain open with the necessary Covid precautions
 - Education Transport teams will continue to support travel for those children who need it
 - AccessBus team will continue to support its vulnerable customers providing essential shopping trips and signposting to community and home shopping services.
- 2.7 The Combined Authority is providing advice and support to the process of planning the provision of vaccination and testing sites.

Covid 19 Transport Survey

- 2.8 The Combined Authority commissioned 4 waves of telephone surveys of West Yorkshire residents during the summer, autumn and winter of 2020, aimed at

exploring attitudes and impacts of COVID-19 on transport. The most recent survey was conducted between 25 November – 1 December (just before the 2nd Lockdown ended), and collected the views of a statistically representative sample of the West Yorkshire population (each wave involved 700 respondents with quotas for age, gender, ethnicity and district). A summary of findings of the survey is available. The survey results reveal:

- compared to pre-COVID, more than half of respondents expect to travel by public transport less in the short term, consistent across all survey waves
- a shift to car and away from public transport for travel into city centres (excludes commuting)
- a reluctance to use public transport by non-users although those who do use it are generally comfortable doing so.
- a growth in confidence in using public transport compared to at the start of the pandemic
- as in previous waves, respondents are walking and cycling more than before COVID-19
- this survey provides further evidence of a sustained preference for more home working in the long term; 62% of respondents said that in the long term, they are likely to work at home more often than before COVID-19.

Supporting our bus passengers

- 2.9 During the November lockdown period bus patronage fell from around 58% of that normal observed in October to around 45%. This started to increase again following the introduction of Tier 3 restrictions on 2nd December however patronage remained significantly lower than the equivalent weeks in December 2019 and there was no significant growth in demand over the holiday period. The graphs in **Appendix 1** illustrate bus use over the pandemic.
- 2.10 A separate report on this agenda sets out the financial implications of the pandemic on the local bus service and the anticipated next stages.
- 2.11 The Combined Authority continues to work with all partners to support bus passengers during this period. During the pre-Christmas period, a joint publicity and reinforcement campaign was undertaken to encourage passengers to wear a face covering when travelling by bus. Work continues in this regard with support from PCSOs.

Supporting our rail passengers

- 2.12 The national lifting of COVID-19 restrictions for the 25 December made demand more unpredictable, the railway responded by providing strengthening to rail services where possible, providing additional bus replacement services as a back up to rail services and additional staff were placed at managed stations. Network Rail adjusted its engineering programme of work. Long Distance operators continued to operate with reservation only so demand could be monitored/managed more readily.

- 2.13 Driver resources were highlighted in the previous report to Transport Committee as an escalating risk to the operation of rail services with contingency plans put in place in case mitigation was required. To date this has remained within manageable levels but the risk continues.
- 2.14 Grand Central restarted operations on 3 December after suspending services during the November national lockdown. However, these were put on hold again after 24 December and the company has now announced they will not operate during the current lockdown.
- 2.15 The annual fare increase, which usually happens in January, has been delayed until March; the DfT have advised that this is to give those commuters who currently need to travel during Covid restrictions the opportunity to buy annual season tickets at current prices. Rail fares across England will rise by 2.6% in March, which is the first increase in rail fares above inflation (1% above RPI of 1.6%) since 2013.
- 2.16 Use of all public transport remained low over the Christmas and New Year holiday period with no significant instances of overcrowding reported. A summary of the latest available public transport demand data is included at **Appendix 1**.

Walking and Cycling

- 2.17 As part of our Emergency Active Travel Fund, 15.5km of segregated cycle lanes have been created across the region, whilst in other locations existing provision has been revitalised through enhanced maintenance to broaden the appeal of the infrastructure. All districts engaged with schools to enable more children and families to travel to school safely and adhere to social distancing rules. All authorities implemented additional cycle parking with a successful pop up bike hub in Kirkgate market offering maintenance training and Calderdale installing 650 cycle/ scooter parking places in schools.
- 2.18 Of particular interest is the delivery of three active-travel-neighbourhoods in Leeds as part of an ongoing engagement with communities to work together with residents and businesses to improve safety and desirability of local streets, enabling improved air quality, safer play spaces and enhanced access to local facilities. Bradford also made improvements to over 180 traffic signals to enable hands-free crossing for pedestrians and inhibit the spread of the virus.
- 2.19 Initial figures demonstrate significant demand for walking and cycling across the Combined Authority. Figures from newly completed infrastructure delivered through the Combined Authority's CityConnect programme show that there has been an ongoing increase in people making more journeys by bike throughout 2020. The routes where the biggest increases have been seen are across off highway routes, such as the improved canal towpath network in West Yorkshire, and the new Castleford to Wakefield Greenway, which has seen an increase in use this year of 102% based on the same period in the previous year. Across all off-highway routes, delivered as part of

phase 2 of the CityConnect programme, total trips have increased by 126% compared to November 2019.

- 2.20 Figures from the monitoring of these projects show that weekend use has seen a significant increase on both on and off highway routes, with an average daily increase along Bradford Canal Road on a weekend of 90.6% in November 2020, when compared with the same period in November 2019. Over 1.1 million trips have been made in total across phase 2 projects since July 2019, with an increase across all routes of 10.4%
- 2.21 Building on this strong foundation of both Emergency Active Travel Fund schemes and the existing pipeline of investments, the CA received notification on 20th November that we had been awarded the full amount requested for Active Travel Tranche 2, £10,052,600, from DfT. In preparation for this announcement, delivery of the funding and its allocation across the districts was approved at Investment Committee on 5th November, subject to receiving the funding from DfT. The first DfT milestone requirement of the funding was to publish a summary consultation plan by 11th December. This was developed in partnership with the districts and has been published on the CA website. This provides a framework allowing each district to plan and deliver their own consultation consistently across West Yorkshire in line with the requirements set out by DfT.
- 2.22 The CA is currently reviewing the previous delivery of Tranche 1 with District Partners to ensure lessons learnt are taken into our delivery of Tranche 2 and development of the consultation and delivery plans accordingly.
- 2.23 For schemes in this second tranche, DfT have requested that funding should, as far as possible, be committed by the end of the 20/21 financial year, with consultation complete and delivery plans in place for remaining schemes to be delivered as soon as reasonably possible thereafter and as far as reasonably possible all schemes to be complete by 31 March 2022. These will be challenging timescales considering the other consultation and delivery activity that is on-going across other Programmes of work and resource availability.
- 2.24 The increase in ridership and the continued investment in schemes promises significant rewards. Although detailed monitoring and evaluation of active travel schemes in a monetised form is an emerging science, initial figures from across the UK are helpful in providing evidence that such investment provides value for money. The DfT's own Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit includes several worked examples to demonstrate how these various benefits (including reduced congestion, reduced emissions, public health benefits and road traffic collision reduction) accrue. For example a scheme on Clifton Road in Bristol resulted in £1.80 of benefit for every £1 spent. These figures are heavily dependent upon the number of cyclists which use the scheme, and the increase in ridership demonstrated over the last year shows that there is appetite for a significant increase in the number of cyclists if schemes which enable safe, utility cycling for all users are implemented.

- 2.25 Greater Manchester's nascent Bee Network, which is currently being developed, seeks to determine a Value for Money figure across a number of these benefits, building on their successful work as a recipient of the Cycling City Ambition Grant. Monitoring on schemes put in as a part of that funding process suggest returns on investment ranging from £1.20 per £1 spent to £9.90 per £1 depending on utilisation. This helps to demonstrate the wide range of benefits that accrue from investing in safe walking and cycling infrastructure. As the CA continues to develop its local cycling and walking plans, data and monitoring information will be used to help target interventions and support the case for investment.

3. Clean Growth Implications

- 3.1 Air quality has seen improvements during the crisis. Local real-time road-side monitoring shows harmful NO₂ emissions on a downward trajectory during the early stages of lockdown and it can be inferred from this that CO₂ emissions were similarly reduced
- 3.2. It is therefore important that the Transport Recovery Plan seeks to ensure that the recovered transport network delivers a more favourable situation for air quality and carbon generation than existed prior to the pandemic

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the Combined Authority's revenue budget. This is manifested in reduced commercial income, increased bus station costs, lost commission from MCard sales and increased costs of bus service contracts where fares revenue is used to offset costs. The financial implications of COVID are set out in and accompanying paper on this agenda.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6. Staffing Implications

- 6.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

7. External Consultees

- 7.1 The content of this report has been developed with input from bus and rail operators.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the Committee notes the updates provided in this report.

9. Background Documents

- 9.1 Transport Recovery Plan, Item 6, Appendix 2, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, 27 July 2020, available via this link:
<https://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=133&MIId=963&Ver=4>

10. Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1 - Summary of public transport patronage data