

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 15 JANUARY 2021 AT REMOTE MEETING TO BE
LIVESTREAMED HERE:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCazjNSGpqZZT41Vibn2ZK9A/live>
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Present:

Councillor Kim Groves (Chair)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Manisha Kaushik (Deputy Chair)	Kirklees
Councillor Martyn Bolt (Leader of the Opposition)	Kirklees Council
Councillor Neil Buckley	Leeds City Council
Councillor Peter Caffrey	Calderdale Council
Councillor Peter Carlill	Leeds City Council
Councillor Colin Campbell	Leeds City Council
Councillor Andy D'Agorne	York Council
Councillor Sinead Engel	Bradford Council
Councillor Miss Jo Hepworth	Wakefield Council
Councillor James Homewood	Kirklees Council
Councillor Hassan Khan	Bradford Council
Mark Roberts	Beer Hawk Ltd
Councillor Daniel Sutherland	Calderdale Council
Councillor Kevin Swift	Wakefield Council

In attendance:

Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Councillor Lisa Mulherin	Leeds City Council
Paul Matthews	First Group
Graham Meiklejohn	Transpennine Express
Patrick Sibley	Arriva
Jonathan Bray	Urban Transport Group
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Alan Reiss	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Liz Hunter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Matthew Page	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Laura Simpkins	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
James Nutter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ben Kearns	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dominic Martin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

34. Chair's Introduction

The chair informed the committee that Councillor Michael Ellis had sadly passed away. A minute's silence was observed in memory of Councillor Ellis.

35. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Simon Pringle.

36. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared during the meeting.

37. Exempt information - possible exclusion of the press and public

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

38. Minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 20 November 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Transport Committee be approved.

39. Urban Transport Group Presentation

Jonathan Bray of the Urban Transport Group provided the Committee with a presentation informing them of the work being undertaken by the organisation.

Members questioned the potential future of government funding for the bus network highlighted within the presentation, particularly whether this funding was likely to be withdrawn gradually after the pandemic had abated or whether the transition would be more abrupt. It was noted that additional recovery funding was proposed by the Department for Transport for the transitional period, and additional capital funding (including £3 billion) had also been promised by the Prime Minister.

Resolved: The Committee thanked Jonathan Bray and the Urban Transport Group for the presentation.

40. COVID-19 Impacts and Recovery

The Committee reviewed a report providing an update on the impact of the pandemic on transport in the region, as well as proposals for recovery. The Chair thanked the hard work of the research and intelligence team for the transport survey information included in the report which had gathered responses from members of the public from different age groups and locations all across West Yorkshire.

The report highlighted shifts toward increased car use, which would need to be addressed as part of the Carbon Reduction Pathways work. Demand for public transport had fallen significantly with the onset of the latest national

lockdown, and discussions were underway with bus operators on how to use available resources prudently without impacting the ability of key workers and others to travel to their workplaces. Similar discussions had recently taken place between the Government and rail industry, and there were expected to be some slight reductions in rail services in coming weeks.

Members raised the following questions and concerns:

- How members of the public would be informed of changes to bus services, and on the impact these changes would have. Discussion about the next steps was on-going with the bus service, but it was emphasised that there was no intention to remove routes or services in any significant form at this stage of the lockdown.
- How face covering rules and reinforcement would change as the country began to move out of the pandemic. The importance of regaining public confidence was underlined and the Combined Authority was following Government guidelines and would be taking health advice on the best course of action as the situation developed.
- The importance of engaging the community in the course of any adoption of active travel schemes or neighbourhoods, and how the effectiveness of investment in these schemes was measured.
- The potential health and tourism benefits of active travel schemes, and whether these were being adequately emphasised to the public.
- The importance of a commitment to maintenance as a part of these schemes, as well as the difficulties of funding this maintenance.
- Issues with the Castleford Greenway were highlighted as an example of the importance of ensuring the results of the scheme were delivered as promised and were fit-for-purpose.
- How to assess the benefits of walking initiatives separately of cycling, including the benefits to the high street, as these schemes could be low-cost but have a high impact.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

41. COVID Bus Funding

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Transport Services on the status of bus funding.

It was noted a large degree of uncertainty existed regarding future bus funding. The current funding arrangements were being renewed with a rolling eight-week notice period, and it was expected this would continue until March 2021. Some recovery funding was expected after this notice period was triggered but the amount was still uncertain, as was how quickly and to what extent patronage levels would recover. It was estimated the funding gap for the region could be as large as £1.5 million per week.

It was highlighted that the period after leaving lockdown would be very important for the economic recovery, and bus services would be vital in supporting this. The Chair and leading members of the Combined Authority have therefore written to Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport,

expressing their concerns about this funding uncertainty. It was proposed that the Committee also write to the Secretary of State in support of the Combined Authority's letter.

Members raised additional points of concern, such as the fact that many communities in the region had less than 50% car ownership, as well as the importance of ensuring public transport was accessible for young people so that they were more likely to use it in the future.

It was noted that a response to Transport for Greater Manchester's consultation regarding its 'Doing Buses Differently' proposals was being drafted, and this would be shared with Members when completed.

Resolved:

- (i) That the updates provided in the report be noted.
- (ii) That a letter be sent from the Committee to Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport, supporting the West Yorkshire Leaders' letter of 4 January 2021 in seeking assurances from the Government regarding support for the recovery of the bus service.

42. Rail Matters

The Committee considered a report on the development of the West Yorkshire Rail Strategy, including a letter from Combined Authority leaders in response to the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment (RNA).

Members received an update about Transport for the North (TfN), who had strongly agreed that the RNA was inadequate and that the funding limits were insufficient to allow the delivery of the levelling-up agenda. It was felt that the North was being forced to choose between the completion of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, and it was noted that none of the scenarios given in the RNA would deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail in full. This stood in strong contrast to reports of overspending on other parts of rail investment. TfN had agreed to draft a statutory letter, made public and shared with MPs, and to seek an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport.

Members largely shared the concerns raised over the RNA and supported the proposal of a letter being sent to the Government expressing their opposition to the scheme. Wakefield Members noted their abstention from this letter as they supported the approach to priorities displayed by the RNA. Members discussed the links between investment in new capacity such as HS2 on local schemes.

The long-term benefits of protecting former rail corridors both locally and nationally were highlighted, and it was agreed that a paragraph supporting this would be added to the proposed letter.

The important role of Leeds Railway Station was discussed, with Members emphasising its role as a main transport hub for the North. It was noted that any limitations of Leeds Railway Station restricted rail developments in the

region, and that further investment was an important priority for the region.

Members discussed the expected Williams Rail Review, which it was hoped would provide useful insights in how some of the problems discussed could be solved.

The Committee also noted the Combined Authority's response to the Transport Select Committee call for evidence into major transport infrastructure projects, as well as the Union Connectivity Review, which had been circulated to Members. Members had provided input into the Union Connectivity Review response prior to the meeting, but it was highlighted that further investment in rail provision was needed if it was hoped that a significant share of the public would switch from flight to rail for long-distance domestic journeys as well as those to other nearby nations.

Resolved:

- (i) That the updates provided in the report be noted.
- (ii) That a letter be sent from the Committee (with the abstention of Wakefield Members) to the Government explaining and expressing opposition to the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment, including the concerns outlined in paragraph 2.17 of the submitted report and also highlighting the importance of protecting former rail corridors.
- (iii) That the Committee retrospectively endorses the Combined Authority's input to the Union Connectivity Review call for evidence.
- (iv) That the Committee notes that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority response to the "Transport Select Committee call for evidence into Major transport infrastructure projects".

43. Carbon Impact Assessment

The Committee heard a report from the Director of Policy, Strategy and Communication on proposals to improve the assessment of any carbon impact in decision-making. Members recognised the importance of this work in tackling the climate emergency and were pleased to note that these proposals embedded assessment into all stages of developing schemes. It was hoped that the proposed methodology could be completed and applied to schemes currently in the assurance processes over the next few months.

It was questioned what could be done to prevent the loss of agreed-upon funding if a project were changed or not progressed due to the carbon impact assessment. This was currently within the Combined Authority, and further conversations may be needed with the Government to ensure the funding could be reallocated to other schemes.

Members raised concerns regarding the different target dates being publicised by different organisations and whether this could potentially cause confusion among the public and hinder communication. Messaging was recognised as

an important challenge to address, and it was noted that the Combined Authority's target of significant progress by 2030 aligned with Leeds City Council's target of net-zero emissions by the same year.

The importance of a united approach among constituent authorities was highlighted, and it was recognised that each authority had made a commitment to ensuring carbon impact assessment was considered throughout their work.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

44. Summary of Transport Schemes

Members considered a report updating them on approvals from the recent meetings of the Investment Committee and of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Resolved: That the report be noted.