

**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 2 July 2021

**Subject:** **Transport Network Update**

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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:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the current performance of the transport network in West Yorkshire, including an overview of the Combined Authority's activity and responses.

## 2 Information

### Summary picture

- 2.1 The overall picture continues to be dominated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as restrictions ease, passenger numbers are beginning to recover as are road traffic volumes.
- 2.2 Since 17 May we have been at Step 3 of the Government's 'roadmap' which enabled indoor hospitality to reopen under capacity and social distancing limitations with the advice remaining to "work from home if you can". At the time of writing all legal limits on social contact and travel advice are planned to be removed on 19 July.

- 2.3 The Government's review of social distancing is separate to the roadmap and will consider the capacity constraints on public transport and other precautions such as face coverings beyond the Step 4 stage.

### **Use of the network**

#### Overview

- 2.4 The general picture on bus and rail services remains one of recovering patronage whilst maintaining social distancing and developing passenger confidence. The lifting of "work from home" advice is anticipated to restore some of the commuter demand although changes in ways of working may cause a longer term impact on demand.
- 2.5 Road traffic levels are reaching pre pandemic rates and there is a concern that car use is currently growing faster than public transport use.
- 2.6 The latest available proxy data for public transport use is included at **Appendix 1**. We are working with rail industry colleges to secure reliable data for locations other than Leeds for future reports.

#### Bus network

- 2.7 Ridership on buses has increased since the re-opening of education and non-essential retail. At the time of writing, bus use was at around 65% of that which could be expected in June. Service levels were restored to 100% of pre pandemic rates from 11 April. Enhanced cleaning and sanitisation continues to be deployed on buses and at bus stations. Face covering compliance in bus stations is around 90%.
- 2.8 A revised risk assessment was agreed nationally in May which enabled bus capacity to increase to around 75%. This has reduced the number of incidents where passengers have been left at stops due to reaching safe capacity. Real time information screens and apps continue to advise customers as to how full an approaching bus is. Data from ticket machines is being used to identify the busy times and target duplicate buses where available.
- 2.9 School and college buses resumed on 8 March with the additional capacity funded by the Department for Education. This provision is now expected to operate until the end of the academic year. The deployment of additional buses and coaches to school services limits the availability of buses to meet the overall increase in demand.

#### Rail network

- 2.10 Passenger numbers on trains continue to rise with Northern reporting levels at 40-45% during the week and as high as 70% on some services at the weekend compared to pre-COVID levels. TransPennine Express (TPE) demand is approximately 40% of pre COVID levels Monday to Friday and over

50% at the weekend, there has also been an increase in forward bookings reflecting strong demand going forward.

- 2.11 During the May half term week when children were off school, patronage increased significantly during the week for leisure purposes, particularly on the Bank Holiday Monday with figures reflecting that of pre-COVID levels. Social distancing on several services would have been challenging and continues to be monitored by both operators.
- 2.12 Passenger flows are also monitored at Leeds station and for the week ending 6 June 2021 levels were 65% of levels of the same week in 2019 (most recent comparable year pre COVID) and had increased 12.00% on the previous week.
- 2.13 Demand continues to be monitored closely as some services diverted to provide strengthening on leisure services may be required back in urban centres again.

### **Summary of network changes**

#### **Bus network**

- 2.14 The bus network has remained stable with some timetable changes to reflect varying traffic conditions and demand. As reported to the previous meeting, services previously operated by Yorkshire Tiger will transfer to the Transdev owned "Team Pennine" from 28 July.

#### **Rail network**

- 2.15 The May timetable changes came into effect on 16 May 2021 and have been working well. The operators continue to work on the December timetable, initial plans were outlined in the most recent report to Transport Committee, but this will be governed overall by the ongoing resource position for each Train Operating Company. Any changes will be reported as and when they are finalised.
- 2.16 In the May report to Transport Committee an area of concern was raised for Northern regarding a fault which had been discovered in yaw damper brackets on their new electric (Class 331) and diesel fleet (Class 195), resulting in some services being withdrawn in West Yorkshire. An interim fix is now being implemented, which is working, and the fleet are starting to return into service which has meant that the Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford and additional peak services Knaresborough - Leeds were able to return on the 7 June. In addition, services on the Calder Valley and Leeds – York have been prioritised for 3 car 195 formations and Hull-Halifax returned to 4 cars which is welcomed as these services were those showing high patronage. Northern have advised that all 24 affected trains should be back into service by the end of June.

## Passenger network performance

### Bus network

- 2.17 The latest available performance data for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021 is provided in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.18 Reliability data is calculated as the number of miles operated as a percentage of those that were scheduled to run. It is reported that 98.4% of scheduled miles were operated, a 0.2% increase in comparison to the same period in 2020.
- 2.19 Punctuality data is categorised in two ways:
- Origin: the percentage of buses that departed their first stop on time.
  - Intermediate: the percentage of buses that departed their timing points on time.
- 2.20 It is reported that 95.4% of buses started their journey on time, and 92.3% of buses were on time at selected stops along their journey, a 2.8% increase and 9.6% increase, respectively, in comparison to the same quarter in 2020.
- 2.21 With a return to lockdown for the whole period, bus operators maintained reliability except for a minor drop in the trend in January, caused by extreme weather, when some services had to be suspended. Service reliability is also impacted by driver availability which has been affected by Covid related absence. Bus operators are also reporting higher than average staff turnover at present.
- 2.22 Punctuality significantly improved this period with less traffic on the roads, In the year-on-year comparison, the first three months of 2021 achieved close to a 10% improvement on the period immediately before the pandemic. The April- June data will be presented to the next meeting however, early indications would suggest that punctuality has deteriorated as traffic congestion has returned.

### Rail network

- 2.23 The last four periods performance reports for TPE, Northern and LNER are included in **Appendix 3**.
- 2.24 Prior to the Covid government lockdowns and reduction in timetabled services rail performance was poor. This was predominantly due to network congestion; any small delay had a knock-on effect to other services. As Rail operators build back these timetables it is recognised that there needs to be carefully managed growth, without impacting adversely on performance.
- 2.25 The newly introduced timetable is operating reliably but performance has declined slightly since the last period reported to Committee. However, Time

To 3 (Percentage of recorded station stops called at within 3 minutes of the planned time) for Northern and TPE remains above 90%. Cancellations for both operators has increased with Northern at 1.5% and TPE at 2.9%.

- 2.26 Trespass on the railway continues to impact on performance. Network Rail are working closely with operators and targeting reported hotspots with regular visits. They have also been ensuring that covert cameras are working correctly, and foliage is cut back. Additional signage has also been installed to act as an added deterrent. We have offered to assist the industry in supporting its anti-trespass campaigns where this will help.

## **Passenger satisfaction and attitudes**

### Overview

- 2.27 We are currently running the 5th wave of the COVID-19 Transport Recovery Survey series with fieldwork due to be completed by Friday 18th June. The results of previous survey waves are available via the link in **Background Documents**.
- 2.28 The survey is designed to gain insight into the attitudes and impacts of COVID-19 on transport by surveying a statistically representative sample of the West Yorkshire population (accounting for age, gender, ethnicity and district). Questions cover mode share by purpose in the short term vs pre-COVID-19, satisfaction with the public transport network, walking & cycling, home working and this time will asking respondents to quantify expected future travel demand.
- 2.29 Future waves are planned to take place in August and November (subject to COVID-19 easing of restrictions).
- 2.30 In March 2021, the Combined Authority conducted its annual Public Perceptions of Transport survey. More details of this, including a summary will be presented to the next meeting of the Committee. Initial analysis of the sample of 1,800 respondents, the following key results were obtained for bus:
- Mode Choice – the proportion of people using bus at least 4 days per week had halved (from 17% to 9%)
  - Satisfaction with assets and services - Local bus services saw an increase in satisfaction of 16%, from 2019/20. Satisfaction scores for local bus services (7.0) are at their highest level since 2015/16.
- 2.31 In previous years, the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance has also utilised data from the Transport Focus Annual Bus Passenger Survey to understand the areas of strength with regards to bus services, and those which require targeted interventions for improvement. However due to the pandemic the survey wasn't conducted in 2020, and previous research is now significantly out of date.

- 2.32 Instead Transport Focus has been conducting nationally representative research with circa 2000 members of the public (not all of which are passengers on public transport).
- 2.33 Noting that this has a relatively small sample size, key findings from the attitudinal survey (see link in Background Papers) conducted between 4 – 6 June are:
- the proportion of people who used a bus in the last seven days increased to 10%
  - around 9 in 10 of those making bus journeys felt safe in doing so
- 2.34 Key findings from the satisfaction survey (see link in Background Papers) are:
- 80% of passengers using the bus outside of London are satisfied with the journey overall (down 3% since 5 March 2021)
  - 87% of passengers felt safe in relation to Covid-19 (down 1% since 5 March 2021)
- 2.35 Whilst an uplift in bus use has been evident, there has been some marginal decline in measures of confidence and journey satisfaction. This may be linked to the impact on punctuality of growing traffic levels. This information is crucial in understanding passenger sentiment as we approach recovery and tailoring our communications accordingly.
- 2.36 To help to address this, launches of the MCard Mobile Fare Deal for under 19s, and the Leeds element of the Core Bus Network programme (visually signposting passengers to the high frequency network as set out in the accompanying report) are both planned for the summer.

### **Update on Combined Authority Transport Network activity**

#### **Current Usage Indicators**

- 2.37 **Appendix 4** includes a summary of a number of usage indicators of Combined Authority “Metro” branded activity which give a comparison between current levels of demand and that experienced pre pandemic. These measures will be developed into a ‘dashboard’ for future meetings.
- 2.38 Usage of all services has been impacted by the reduction in travel arising from the pandemic. Use of older/ disabled bus passes is around 55% of pre pandemic rates and is growing more slowly than the general ridership trends. Use of under 19s tickets and passes is growing faster as education and leisure travel increases. Customer volumes at bus station travel centres remain low whereas demand for travel information services is in line with general public transport use.

## Fares and Ticketing

- 2.39 The new bus and rail MCard Day Savers aimed at those who are flexible commuters will be promoted from Step 4 of the Government's roadmap currently planned on 19 July 2021. Customers will be able to buy ten Day Savers for the price of nine using the new MCard Mobile app.
- 2.40 The Fare Deal for under 19s which was approved by the Transport Committee will be introduced on 20 November 2020 will be introduced from 26 July. This provides:
- A simplified single fare system – 60p, £1.20 and £1.80.
  - A 10% saving in MCard multi journey tickets with a MyDay “go anywhere” ticket reducing to £2.50

## Bus Alliance Update

- 2.41 A new governance structure for the Bus Alliance was introduced in April. The main focus of the Alliance is to collaborate on developing a Bus Service Improvement Plan as set out elsewhere on this agenda.

## Rail Forum

- 2.42 Councillor Groves led a meeting of the Train Operators Forum on 19 May 2021. This was attended by rail operators, Network Rail and TfN.
- 2.43 Discussions included how to adapt to the changing market conditions and rebuild rail demand. Transport for the North provided an update on rail reform. The management of the current COVID-19 crisis was discussed, and the details are reflected in the detail of this report.
- 2.44 Network Rail provided an update on key projects which they are leading on including LAIP (Leeds Area Improvement Programme) which is a programme of works to improve station capacity. The current phase of the programme is to extend platforms 4-6. A separate detailed presentation on the works and the related passenger handling plans has been agreed to be provided to Councillor Groves and officers at a later date.
- 2.45 Northern outlined work which that it is currently carrying out to improve its cycling provision on trains and at stations and detailed how it intends to collaborate more to provide joined up solutions.

## **3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications**

- 3.1 Air quality improved during the periods of lower traffic levels earlier in the pandemic with local real-time road-side monitoring showed harmful NO<sub>2</sub> emissions on a downward trajectory and it can be inferred from this that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were similarly reduced. It is important that the recovered transport network delivers a more favourable situation for air quality and carbon generation than existed prior to the pandemic.

#### **4. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 4.1 Maintaining public transport for critical workers is key to ensuring continued public services during the lockdown restriction. The restoration of an effective, stable and affordable public transport network will be key in ensuring the post pandemic economic recovery is inclusive particularly to communities with limited access to private transport.

#### **5. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.1 Whilst there are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this update report, ensuring an effective, stable and affordable public transport network is key for equality and diversity.

#### **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 COVID-19 has had 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. It is therefore key to the Combined Authority finances that the actions described in this report restore patronage and revenue.

#### **7. Legal Implications**

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

#### **8. Staffing Implications**

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

#### **9. External Consultees**

- 9.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

#### **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 That the Committee note the updates on the current performance of the public transport network provided in this report.

#### **11. Background Documents**

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>

During the Coronavirus outbreak, we are publishing a fortnightly economic monitor and a weekly dashboard to help better understand the changing

situation. This includes information on public transport patronage. They are available via this link: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/economic-monitor/>

Transport Focus is publishing regular 'Travel During COVID-19' attitudinal and satisfaction surveys of potential and actual public transport users. These can be accessed via this link: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/home/coronavirus-latest/coronavirus-insight/>

Earlier waves of the Combined Authority's COVID-19 transport survey are reported on the website here: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/economic-monitor/> Wave 5 data will be included here when available.

## **12. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Proxy public transport use data

Appendix 2 – WY Bus Alliance Operator Performance Report Jan - Mar 21

Appendix 3 – Rail network performance data

Appendix 4 – Metro branded activity measures