

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 2 JULY 2021 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC HALL,
CALVERLEY ST., LEEDS LS1 1UR**

Present:

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Chair)	Bradford Council
Councillor Kim Groves (Deputy Chair)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Manisha Kaushik	Kirklees
Councillor Martyn Bolt (Leader of the Opposition)	Kirklees Council
Councillor Neil Buckley	Leeds City Council
Councillor Colin Campbell	Leeds City Council
Councillor Suhail Choudhry	Bradford Council
Councillor Andy D'Agorne	York Council
Councillor Rizwana Jamil	Bradford Council
Councillor Charlie Keith	Wakefield Council
Councillor Naveed Riaz	Bradford Council
Councillor Taj Salam	Bradford Council
Councillor Daniel Sutherland	Calderdale Council
Councillor Robert Thornber	Calderdale Council

In attendance:

Councillor Eric Firth	Kirklees Council
Councillor Matthew Morley	Wakefield Council
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw	Bradford Council
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dominic Martin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Homewood, Cllr Cunningham, Cllr Garbutt, Cllr Hayden, Mark Roberts and Simon Pringle.

2. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

Cllr Salam declared his employment with a bus operator. There were no other pecuniary interests declared during the meeting.

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

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

4. Minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 12 March 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the Transport Committee meeting of 12 March 2021 be approved.

5. Governance arrangements

The Committee considered a report in respect of the following governance arrangements:

- Advising the Transport Committee of the Committee's terms of reference which had been approved by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority at the Annual Meeting on 24 June 2021, and of appointments to the Transport Committee.
- To appoint District Consultation Sub-Committees, their members and Chairs.
- To establish a Local Bus Working Group, and an Active Travel Working Group, and a Decarbonisation and Emissions Working Group.

It was reported that a review of Transport Committee arrangements was to be undertaken in the near future. The practical arrangements for working with the Transport Scrutiny Committee, formed as part of the new governance arrangements of the Combined Authority, would be examined as part of this review. Members discussed public participation at meetings and it was noted that this would be considered as part of the review.

In response to a query raised, it was noted that whilst the terms of reference for the DCSCs did not explicitly mention active travel, matters relating to active travel could still be considered at DCSCs.

Resolved:

- a) That the Committee notes the terms of reference for Transport Committee as attached at Appendix 1
- b) That the Committee notes the following appointments made by the Combined Authority:
 - Councillor Hinchcliffe as Chair of Transport Committee
 - Councillor Groves as Lead Member, Public Transport,
 - Councillor Kaushik as Lead Member, Active Travel
 - Councillor Bolt as leader of the opposition on Transport Committee.
- c) That the Committee establishes a District Consultation Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2021/22 for each Constituent Council area, with

the terms of reference set out in Appendix 2.

- d) That the Committee appoints to the relevant District Consultation Sub-Committee each Local Authority Co-optee on the Transport Committee from a Constituent Council, as a voting member.
- e) That the Committee appoints a Chair for each District Consultation Sub-Committee.
 - Councillor Taj Salam for Bradford
 - Councillor Allan Garbutt for Wakefield
 - Councillor Lou Cunningham for Leeds
 - Councillor James Homewood for Kirklees
 - Councillor Dan Sutherland for Calderdale
- f) That the Committee notes the meeting dates of the Transport Committee and agrees the dates for each District Consultation Sub-Committee set out in Appendix 3.
- g) That the Committee re-establishes the Local Bus Services Working Group for the municipal year 2021/22, with terms of reference and arrangements as set out in Appendix 4.
- h) That the Committee establishes an Active Travel Working Group for the municipal year 2021/22, with the terms of reference and arrangements as set out in Appendix 5.
- i) That the Committee establishes with the Climate, Energy and Environment Working Group, a Decarbonisation and Emissions Working Group for the municipal year 2021/22, with the terms of reference and arrangements as set out in Appendix 6.

6. Bus Service Improvement Plan

The Committee considered a report updating them on the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the process for its approval, as well as on the current position of bus funding and next steps.

In order to access government funding for the improvement of bus services, there was a requirement for the Combined Authority to submit a BSIP by the end of October. Members were advised on the requirements set out by the Department for Transport, and on the proposed timetable for the development of the BSIP. A workshop for Members of the Committee was planned in early August, with the aim of drawing out what Members wanted to see from the BSIP. The BSIP would set out the Combined Authority's ambitions for bus services throughout the region, and the intention would be to deliver on these ambitions through the Enhanced Partnership and franchising.

The importance of the Enhanced Partnership was highlighted, not just as a prerequisite in the move toward franchising but also in bringing operators to share in a greater collective responsibility, and in aiding collaboration in

regrowing the bus network after the effects of the pandemic. Regaining public confidence in the bus service was emphasised as being a key aspect of this.

Members noted that the report suggested buses would be more frequent, faster, and more reliable, but also that fares would be lower and flatter, and questioned if this was realistic, particularly with the number of passengers being unknown. It was noted that passenger recovery was already strong in the region compared to national trends. It was also believed that a mass transit system would alleviate one of the historical problems faced by the bus service – the difficulty in sending enough buses through high-traffic corridors such as Leeds-Bradford and Halifax-Huddersfield. The success of flat fares in Bristol, which had been the only area with bus growth in the pre-pandemic period, was also noted.

Members raised the following other questions and concerns:

- The large costs and high degree of bureaucracy involved in proceeding along the route toward bus franchising were noted as being an unnecessary delay to providing a better bus service to the region.
- Members questioned if the intention was for the Combined Authority to own buses and lease them to the bus company as part of the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) bid. Officers advised that this bid was being made in partnership with the three main bus operators of the region – Transdev, Arriva, and First – and that these operators would purchase the buses, bringing significant match funding to the bid. The Combined Authority was also aiming to match fund a number of buses in Calderdale and Kirklees, in order to improve the overall offer of zero-emission buses.
- The difference between bringing buses back into public control versus bringing them into public ownership was discussed, with it being noted the Mayor had previously used the latter wording during her campaign. However, it was highlighted that there was a set process for moving into franchising which was being followed, and which was outside of the control of the Mayor.
- The need to integrate bus use with active travel was discussed. Members noted that as a step toward this, cycle racks were intended to be added at Huddersfield and Dewsbury bus stations.

Members also questioned what control the Combined Authority had over emergency bus funding. Officers advised that as a significant amount of taxpayer money had gone toward supporting the bus industry through payment of concessionary fares at pre-pandemic rates, this came with a commensurate level of influence. Bus operators met with the Combined Authority weekly to discuss the situation and to manage the network in the context of the pandemic.

As part of the move out of lockdown, the Government was expected to continue to ask Combined Authorities to pay concessionary fares at pre-pandemic rates, but it was believed that a new model would be adopted with claims for funding needing to be verified by the Combined Authority.

Further news on this was expected to be released next week.

It was emphasised that the priorities for the next six months would be to maintain the integrity of the bus network and to maintain the connectivity of communities served by buses, as agreed by Combined Authority at its June meeting.

Members requested that officers share the terms of reference of the assessment into franchising after the meeting.

Resolved:

- a) That the Transport Committee endorses the approach and key themes for the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan as set out in the submitted report.
- b) That the Transport Committee endorses the approach for emergency funding for bus services for the remainder of 2021/22 as set out in the submitted report.

7. Rail update

The Committee received an update on rail policy matters including the Williams Review, New Stations Fund, Integrated Rail Plan, Manchester Recovery Taskforce, East Coast Main Line timetable consultation and TransPennine Route Upgrade Transport and Works Act Order submission.

It was highlighted that as the Williams-Shapps review had now been published, a strategic rail partnership would be established with the Combined Authority and industry leaders working together to provide input into shaping the rail network, with the Mayor acting as its chair. The first meeting for this would take place later in July.

The Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) response was discussed – it was noted that although the Combined Authority's response had been overall very positive, due to some concerns raised in the response relating to compulsory orders on land owned by the Combined Authority the response was technically being classed as an objection. This primarily concerned extensive work planned on the tunnel under Huddersfield bus station. The Combined Authority would submit a statement of case next week further detailing these concerns. Discussion would continue with Network Rail to try to implement a technical solution safeguarding the operation of the bus station and also enabling the works to continue unhindered.

Members welcomed the news that White Rose and Thorpe Park stations had secured funding from the New Stations Fund, noting it would make a large difference to residents in these areas. It was however also noted that the Thorpe Park station was tied to Integrated Rail Plan, which was still awaiting publication, and that a funding gap still existed. The need for four-tracking in this area was also discussed, with Members highlighting the need for government funding and emphasising the difference it would make to the region's economy.

Members raised the following other questions and concerns:

- The lack of sufficient car parking facilities at new rail stations was discussed, with Deighton, Mirfield, and Ravensthorpe stations being highlighted. Members noted that improving this would call for a strong partnership between local authorities and the Combined Authority.
- Members questioned how the pandemic had affected the number of trips being made at Leeds Rail Station – the figures were currently at 20% of what they had been pre-pandemic, but were growing.
- Members discussed the potential timetable changes relating to the proposed recast of East Coast Main Line services in May 2022, with the reduction in service to Edinburgh being highlighted. Members were advised that there had been an increase in the number of trains to Edinburgh in recent years, particularly from TransPennine Express, and that this proposed reduction was likely an attempt to find the right balance of provision. It was also noted that consultations were on-going regarding these timetable changes, and Members requested that links to these consultations be circulated after the meeting.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee notes the contents of the submitted report, including the next steps set out.

8. Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme update

Members received an update on the delivery of schemes under the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme (LPTIP) and the improvements it is providing to the facilities and services of which the Committee has oversight.

It was highlighted that the official launch of the Leeds core network map of bus services as depicted in Appendix 2 of the submitted report would take place later this month, and that this model was intended to then be extended into the rest of West Yorkshire.

It was also noted that the East Leeds Demand Responsive Transport pilot would begin in September.

Resolved:

- a) That the Transport Committee notes the improvements to the facilities and services of which it has oversight arising from the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme.
- b) That a further report be provided to the Transport Committee detailing the performance and future funding arrangements for the East Leeds Flexibus following the first year of its operation.

9. Transport Network update

The Committee received an update from the Director of Transport and Property Services providing an update on the current performance of the transport network in West Yorkshire, including an overview of the Combined

Authority's activity and responses.

Bus and rail usage levels were noted as rising, but still significantly below pre-pandemic levels, with road traffic returning at a higher rate.

Members discussed the importance of encouraging young people to use the bus network, particularly for leisure journeys and spontaneous ones and not just more regular travel. Young people are currently the fastest growing group amongst bus passengers, and reliability and affordability were highlighted as key factors in encouraging their return to buses. The Committee had been working toward this goal for some time, and a launch event for the Fare Deal for Young People scheme was planned to take place later in the month, and cheaper Mcard products for young people would take effect from 1 August 2021. It was hoped that the flat fare of £1.20 introduced by the Fare Deal for Young People would have a similar positive effect on usage levels as had been achieved previously by the MyDay ticket introduced in 2020, and bus operators were thanked for their help in implementing this scheme. Data measuring the success of the scheme would be brought to future meetings.

The need to effectively promote these schemes to young people was highlighted by Members. Officers advised that a social media campaign was underway. The importance of utilising links with schools and colleges to actively promote relevant schemes in these environments was also noted.

Members also requested that future reports include information on Grand Central along with the other rail operators.

Resolved: That the Transport Committee notes the updates on the current performance of the public transport network provided in this report.

10. School Bus Services

The Committee received an update from the Director of Transport and Property Services on school transport provision.

Members were advised that school transport planning for the next academic year assumed that attendance would be normal, and the additional capacity measures put in place during the pandemic would not be continued unless the situation changed.

Members noted the proposed arrangements for the procurement of buses as detailed in the report. Part of this would involve the Combined Authority transferring ownership of 60 BMC Condor 'yellow school bus' vehicles of advanced age to the current operators in return for an agreement to retain prices at current levels for up to a further two years on the routes on which these buses operated. This was felt to be the most effective way of getting value for the Combined Authority. Members questioned whether service provision would still be guaranteed if these buses were to reach the end of their life within the next two years; this was confirmed.

Members also discussed the emissions standards of buses in the region. The Combined Authority aimed to move to Euro 6 standards for its buses, but due

to the capacity issues over the course of the pandemic this had been delayed. A tension was identified between working toward clean air goals and minimising costs, and officers advised that navigating this tension would require moving at a careful pace. The importance of this ambition was highlighted, however, as well as the need to standardise across the region.

The safety of new buses was underlined as being paramount, both in terms of preventing the spread of Covid as well as having seatbelts and other safety features. School bus cleaning measures were noted as being thorough, with cleaning after each trip and regular zonal fogging, but the rising Covid rates among children demonstrated the need for this to remain a priority. Concern was also raised that if a school bus were to break down, the replacement bus could potentially be a normal service bus without seatbelts installed.

The lack of manufacturing of buses, nationally and across Europe, was raised as both a challenge and a potential opportunity for employment. It was noted that there had been a large number of order cancellations due to the pandemic and the uncertainty of the business model, but news that Nissan had very recently announced a new plant for manufacturing batteries for electric buses in the UK was welcomed by the Committee.

Members requested that a report on the emission standards of buses throughout the region be brought to a future meeting.

Resolved: That the Committee endorses the approach taken in planning for the 2021/22 academic year and the disposal of the remaining MyBus vehicles.

11. Leeds City Region Transport update

The Committee considered a report on relevant updates on current issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

The strong response to the Connectivity Strategy engagement was welcomed by the Committee, with over 8,700 responses having been received, and this demonstrated how the plans had caught the imagination of the region.

Members questioned whether the walking and cycling schemes discussed in the report would include improvements to Manchester Road, as this was an important route into Bradford for cyclists travelling from Kirklees, and the new 'Sports Village' site at Wyke would likely increase the number of cyclists wishing to use this route.

Members also highlighted the potential danger to cyclists of narrow lanes with fast traffic. The potential to reallocate road space for bus and tram use was discussed in line with the Committee's aim of reducing private car usage. This would tie in with work done to reduce the numbers of HGVs on the road, such as the electrification of the Calder Valley line. The need for officers to review district schemes for bus prioritisation going forward was also noted as being vital.

The need for electric charging points for cars and cycles was discussed, with 88 currently in place throughout West Yorkshire. The Committee noted its

ambition to increase this number, but this had been slowed by legal negotiations regarding land ownership. Improving the availability of these charging points would be a matter for both the Combined Authority and private developers going forward.

Members requested a report on electric charging points in the region being brought to a future meeting, with information from the private sector and from local authorities being included for benchmarking.

Resolved: That the Committee notes the updates provided in this report.

12. Summary of Transport Schemes

The Committee considered a report on the transport related West Yorkshire and York Investment Committee and Combined Authority meeting approvals from recent meetings.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

13. Notes from informal meeting of Transport Committee members held on 14 May 2021

The Committee noted the notes from the informal meeting of 14 May 2021.

14. Chair's Comments

The Committee thanked previous members for their contributions over the last year and officers for their work on the return to face-to-face meetings.