

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 17 September 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 Whilst the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic still dominate, as restrictions ease, the picture is one of recovery; passenger numbers are increasing, and road traffic volumes have returned to near-normal levels. Further increases in passenger use are expected throughout September as schools and universities return with a potential increase in commuting.
- 2.2 On Monday 19 July, England moved to step 4 of the Government's roadmap and most legal restrictions were lifted including requirements for wearing of face coverings. However, the government continues to recommend that people wear face coverings in crowded spaces such as public transport, and

operators are still encouraging passengers to do so.

- 2.3 The Combined Authority is continuing to develop its own products and services in response to the new environment. This includes further development of the MCard mobile app, and increased flexibility for those not travelling to work on a daily basis.

Use of the network

Overview

- 2.4 The general picture on bus and rail services remains one of recovering patronage whilst maintaining Covid safety and developing passenger confidence. There is growing commuter demand, although patterns are not as easy to determine during the summer period, and the longer-term impact on demand patterns remains unclear.
- 2.5 Road traffic levels have returned to near-normal levels and there is concern that car use has recovered faster than public transport use.
- 2.6 The latest available proxy data for transport network 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 At the time of writing, bus use was at around 60% of that which could be expected in late August, rising to over 70% at weekends. Service levels were restored to 100% of pre pandemic rates in April. Service reliability in July and early August was impacted by the reduced availability of bus drivers and engineers due to Covid isolation/ positivity. There are national issues regarding high driver turnover and delays in PSV licences which have impacted on service delivery locally.
- 2.8 Legal restrictions have been lifted, and capacity constraints on buses have generally been removed, although some operators continue to make seats close to the driver unavailable. Real time information screens and apps continue to advise customers as to how full an approaching bus is. Enhanced cleaning and sanitisation continue to be deployed on buses and at bus stations. The wearing of face coverings / masks is strongly advised on buses and they remain mandatory in enclosed bus stations. Compliance is around 50%.
- 2.9 School and college buses resumed in September and service have been planned assuming there is no requirement for social distancing with a strong advisory regarding face coverings. The Fare Deal for Under 19s was launched in late July. The impact is expected with the return to school in September when the weekly and monthly tickets will predominantly be MCard MyDay / Week/Month etc. This may require some young people to switch payment methods from operator apps to the MCard Mobile app.

- 2.10 The Department for Transport introduced a new Bus Recovery Grant scheme from September until March which, along with LTAs continuing to pay concessionary fare reimbursements at pre pandemic rates, is aimed at funding the loss of fares revenue following the pandemic. As a condition of the Combined Authority's payment, bus operators are obliged to maintain service levels until December 2021. The extent to which bus ridership and fares revenue recover over September and October will shape the financial position into 2022. Combined Authority officers will monitor this closely with bus operators.

Rail network

- 2.11 In line with this guidance from Government and listening to concerns about customers not wearing face coverings, Northern and TPE continue to advise customers to wear a face covering when they travel.
- 2.12 Passenger numbers on trains continue to gradually rise with Northern reporting levels at 65% compared to pre-COVID levels. TransPennine Express (TPE) demand is approximately 62% of pre COVID levels with a good number of forward bookings. The number of occasions where social distancing at 1 metre plus will not be possible is also increasing.
- 2.13 Passenger footfall is monitored at Leeds station and for the week ending 15 August 2021 levels were 72% of levels of the same week in 2019 (most recent comparable year pre COVID) and had increased 5% on the previous week. Saturdays in August were showing particularly high levels of footfall, comparable and higher than those experienced before the pandemic. Saturdays remain the busiest day at Leeds station.
- 2.14 August is usually a quieter month for rail travel in general and Northern has reported that during the summer holiday period there are fewer heavier loaded trains and more of a general spread of usage across the day. Weekend services continue to be busy with leisure destinations popular in times of good weather. With the removal of restrictions, it is possible that there could be an increase in commuter flows throughout September so demand will continue to be monitored closely as some trains reallocated to provide strengthening on leisure services may be required back in urban centres again.

Summary of network changes

Bus network

- 2.15 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 transferred to the Transdev owned "Team Pennine" on 28 July.

- 2.16 Park & Ride services at Elland Road and Temple Green resumed in July and have seen steady growth in use over the summer. Stourton Park & Ride opened in early September with an official launch on 16 September.
- 2.17 Arrangements are in hand for the launch of the Flexibus East Leeds service on 27th September, as reported to the previous meeting. Details of the finalised operating arrangements and fares are provided at **Appendix 5**.

Rail network

- 2.18 The operators continue to work on the December timetable plan; initial plans have been outlined 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 which the operators are indicating will be Autumn.
- 2.19 During July a sharp rise of COVID-19 in some localised areas in the North of England created additional resource pressure on the rail industry. This impacted on the ability for Northern to deliver a small number of services in West Yorkshire on two weekends, and there was also an increase of ad hoc cancellations for both operators.
- 2.20 Where possible advance notification to passengers was provided. With the increase of COVID-19 cases more people were asked to isolate via the Test and Trace system despite measures put in place by the rail operators and Network Rail to mitigate against it. In line with changes to the Test and Trace system on the 16 August the number of isolations has reduced, significantly improving Northern's and the rail industry resource position.

Passenger network performance

Bus network

- 2.21 The latest available performance data for the period from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021 is provided in **Appendix 2**
- 2.22 Reliability data is calculated as the number of miles operated as a percentage of those that were scheduled to run. It is reported that 98.04% of scheduled miles were operated, a 1.6% decrease in comparison to the same period in 2020.
- 2.23 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.
- 2.24 It is reported that 91.7% of buses started their journey on time, and 85% of buses were on time at selected stops along their journey, a 4.9% decrease and 3.6% decrease, respectively, in comparison to the same quarter in 2020.

- 2.25 National restrictions were lifted during this quarter, which has resulted in a drop in reliability. This has been impacted by driver availability, which has been affected by Covid related absence. Bus operators continue to report higher than average staff turnover at present.
- 2.26 Bus punctuality was poorer than the corresponding period in 2020 as traffic levels and congestion return to pre pandemic levels.

Rail network

- 2.27 The last four periods performance reports for TPE, Northern and LNER are included in **Appendix 3**.
- 2.28 Since the last period performance was reported to the Transport Committee there has been a general decline. Time To 3 (Percentage of recorded station stops called at within 3 minutes of the planned time) for Northern and TPE has dropped below 90% and for the most recent period sits at 88.98% and 86.3% respectively. Cancellations for both operators have increased with Northern at 3.29% and TPE at 2.0%.
- 2.29 As highlighted above, Test and Trace and increased COVID-19 levels impacted on both operators' performance during the July period. Heat related track issues which are attributed to Network Rail have also impacted during the period due to the increase in summer temperatures.
- 2.30 Trespass on the railway was detailed in the last report to Transport Committee as being an area of concern. This has shown signs of improvement in the most recent month as staff have become more skilled at dealing with incidents and deterrents have started to work. It does remain a key focus area however and Network Rail are continuing to work with the British Transport Police to target hot spots and looking to strengthen the fencing and infrastructure mechanisms which prevent entry onto the railway.
- 2.31 Network Rail has also made progress in the removal of several temporary speed restrictions which can impact adversely in performance for train operators.

Passenger satisfaction and attitudes

West Yorkshire Transport Recovery Survey

- 2.32 The 5th wave of the Combined Authority's COVID-19 Transport Recovery Survey series was completed on Friday 18th June, and analysis of the results has now been undertaken.
- 2.33 The survey is designed to provide 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.

- 2.34 Key findings from this wave in comparison to Wave 1 are:
- A decrease in car use for work in the coming weeks, for the first time, paired with a rise in intentions to walk to work, and slight public transport recovery.
 - Train use increases significantly for other travel into city centres.
 - Car, public transport and taxi use increases significantly for social, leisure and exercise trips.
 - Public transport mode share is likely to remain lower than pre-pandemic levels for all journey purposes.
 - There is significantly less concern about using public transport over time, although there are differences between age groups – under 34's are 64% more likely than those aged over 65 to be 'not at all concerned'.
- 2.35 A link to the findings of the Wave 5 surveys and earlier surveys is included in **Background Documents**.
- 2.36 A future survey wave is planned to take place in late September. This should capture the impact of the return to school and also the potential impact of this on newly establishing routines including a return to workplaces, reflecting the changed advice from July. A further wave is currently planned for early 2022.

Transport Focus Surveys

- 2.37 Transport Focus continue to conduct nationally representative research around travel and journey satisfaction, with circa 2000 members of the public (not all of which are passengers on public transport).
- 2.38 Noting that this has a relatively small sample size, key findings from the satisfaction survey (see link in Background Papers) conducted between 13 – 15 August are:
- 80% of passengers using the bus outside of London are satisfied with the journey overall.
 - 87% of bus passengers felt safe in relation to Covid-19.
 - 77% of rail passengers are satisfied with the journey overall.
 - 90% of rail passengers felt safe in relation to COVID-19.
- 2.39 This represents a steady-state for bus, but a slight reduction in satisfaction with rail (although not in relation to COVID-19 safety). This likely reflects recent increases in rail use, and similar effect was seen in the bus data earlier in the year.

Update on Combined Authority activity

Current Usage Indicators

- 2.40 **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, where available.
- 2.41 Development work on these indicators continues, and for this meeting most of the data is now presented in charts so that trends are easier to see. Work will continue to establish a ‘dashboard’ approach to reporting of these indicators.
- 2.42 Usage of all services was impacted by the reduction in travel arising from the pandemic. Customer volumes at bus station travel centres remain low whereas demand for travel information services is in line with public transport use. Some measures (e.g. use of the Metro website, park and ride use) have slightly dipped in summer, which may be related to the summer holidays. Calls to MetroLine continue to recover and are now approaching pre-pandemic levels.

Fares and Ticketing

- 2.43 The new bus and rail MCard Day Savers on the MCard Mobile app are now being promoted. Customers will be able to buy ten Day Savers for the price of nine using the new MCard Mobile app, with discounts also available for purchases of 3 and 5 tickets.
- 2.44 The Fare Deal for under 19s which was approved by the Transport Committee on 20 November 2020 was introduced from 26 July. A clearer picture on the impact on use will be available after the restart of the new term.
- 2.45 The new structure can be summarised as follows:
- 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. Operator only period tickets are withdrawn

Bus Alliance Update

- 2.46 A new governance structure for the Bus Alliance was introduced in April. The current focus of the Alliance is to collaborate on developing a Bus Service Improvement Plan as set out elsewhere on this agenda.
- 2.47 Since the last meeting 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) have been launched.

Rail Forum

- 2.48 Councillor Groves led a meeting of the Train Operators Forum on 18 August 2021. This was attended by rail operators, Network Rail and TfN.
- 2.49 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority provided a presentation on Covid-19 transport recovery surveys which have been carried out. The surveys included working from home experiences, comfortability of travelling by rail and future predicted demand for commuting on rail. They welcomed feedback from the rail industry on the frequencies of carrying these surveys out in the future.
- 2.50 Rail operators discussed how they are managing current Covid challenges which are covered in this report and Transport for the North provided an industry update with detail of a 'Return to Rail' marketing campaign which will promote places to visit in the North and promote operator offers.
- 2.51 The Transpennine Route Upgrade was also considered and the importance of delivering West Yorkshire long term goals but also connectivity and accessibility not just for rail passengers but also the wider group of people who live in the vicinity of the project.
- 2.52 Northern outlined a new project that they are working on alongside other industry partners to help combat 'Unwanted Sexual Behaviour' (USB) on trains. The project aims to help ensure rail passengers and colleagues are equipped with the tools and knowledge to seek help with and report USB and to create an increased deterrence to reduce USB.

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 NO₂ emissions on a downward trajectory and it can be inferred from this that CO₂ 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.
- 4.2 The increase in flexible ticketing options and further development of the MCard product range are specifically intended to increase affordable options for accessing employment and services, to contribute to the Authority's inclusive growth objectives.

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.
- 5.2 The Fare Deal for under 19s set out in this report is a specific initiative to increase affordable mobility options for young people. This increases life chances in respect of education, training, employment, and social opportunities at a crucial life stage, which can help to overcome equality barriers.

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/>

The Combined Authority's COVID-19 transport survey results are reported on the website here: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/covid-19-transport-survey/> This includes the latest Wave 5 data.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 Proxy transport network use data

Appendix 2 WY Bus Alliance Operator Performance Report April - June 21

Appendix 3 Rail network performance data

Appendix 4 Metro branded activity measures

Appendix 5 Flexibus East Leeds