
Report to: Transport Scrutiny Committee

Date: 23 September 2021

Subject: **Transport Functions & Priorities Overview**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the Transport Scrutiny Members with an overview of the Combined Authority's powers, functions and ability to influence connectivity and travel in West Yorkshire.

2. Information

The Combined Authority's Statutory Transport Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Combined Authority is the statutory Local Transport Authority for West Yorkshire and is able to exercise powers under the Transport Acts. In addition to its general role in setting and co-ordinating transport policy and investment, the Acts confer on the Combined Authority a range of powers and responsibilities which include:
- Responsibility to create and implement a Local Transport Plan
 - Power to make concessionary travel schemes to reduce the cost of fares for specific categories of people
 - Powers to identify the need for and commission socially necessary bus services
 - Responsibility to set and implement a bus passenger information strategy
 - Powers to make a statutory ticketing scheme
 - Powers to own and operate transport facilities
- 2.2 The current statutory Local Transport Plan is the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040. More detailed plans on bus, active travel, connectivity infrastructure, rail and mass transit have been created and endorsed by the Combined Authority. The Combined Authority is continuing to define its plans

across all the modes including a future mobility strategy and rail strategy that is being developed in the light of current structural changes in rail provision. The documents are available on the link below

[Transport strategy - Combined Authority | Unlocking potential, accelerating growth \(westyorks-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/transport-strategy-combined-authority-unlocking-potential-accelerating-growth)

- 2.3 In addition the Combined Authority has powers under the Bus Services Act to enter into formal partnerships with bus operators and the Mayor has powers under this Act to make a bus franchising scheme.

Transport Policy

- 2.4 In 2017, the Combined Authority adopted the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040, which sets out our policy framework for improving transport. Transport Strategy 2040 represents the statutory requirement placed on the Combined Authority to produce a Local Transport Plan. It was developed with the oversight of Transport Committee.
- 2.5 A modern, integrated transport system is essential for an economy to flourish and communities to thrive. West Yorkshire is a significant and growing economy which has outgrown its transport system. To fulfil its full potential as a major player in the Northern Powerhouse, and to support the decarbonisation of the economy, our region needs a transformation in its transport system, to one that is fit for the 21st Century.
- 2.6 To achieve the regional target of being net zero carbon by 2038, with significant progress by 2030, emissions from the transport sector will need to reduce to virtually zero from a high today of 4.9 MtCO₂ / annum. The task is extremely challenging and will require significant, swift and collaborative action across the sector. The Mayor is committed and fully supportive of the need to reduce emissions, reflected in her pledges to tackle the climate emergency, deliver sustainable homes, implement greener buses, and provide green jobs.
- 2.7 To expand on these commitments the West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan is being brought before the Combined Authority in October. It will detail the activity that will be prioritised over the next three years, aligning with the Mayor's term in office, including those actions that the Combined Authority will look to progress within the transport sector.
- 2.8 In March to June 2021 the Combined Authority engaged on the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan, which is an extension of the Transport Strategy, setting out a delivery plan and long-term pipeline to 2040 of transport infrastructure improvements to improve connectivity in our region. The technical work to develop the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan was also overseen by Transport Committee, and with the input of each of the five West Yorkshire partner councils, taking place over a period of two years. In September 2021 a submission was made to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, which was based on starting to deliver the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan.

- 2.9 The plan identifies options for investing in bus, rail, cycling, walking, mass transit, digital demand responsive transport, other innovative solutions, as well as the road network, with the intent to enhance economic performance by connecting all of our important places, and in doing so, help deliver inclusive growth by giving particular attention to the needs for our currently more disadvantaged and peripheral communities. The plan makes the case to Government for longer-term local transport budgets to deliver improvements, including unlocking the government's infrastructure fund linked to the West Yorkshire devolution deal.

The Combined Authority's Role In Bus

- 2.10 The Combined Authority has a co-ordinating role in bus service provision but is not able to operate bus services or establish a company to do so. Bus services are operated by private companies who can determine routes, frequencies and fares.
- 2.11 In exercise of the statutory powers set out in 2.1, the Combined Authority:
- Procures and contracts with bus companies to provide socially necessary bus services which make up around 15% of the network in West Yorkshire. These are largely services which would not operate if bus provision was determined solely on commercial grounds.
 - Procures school transport services in partnership with district Councils
 - Administers the English National Concessionary Fare Scheme which provides free bus travel for seniors and people with qualifying disabilities
 - Operates a concessionary fare scheme which provides cheaper bus travel for under 19s
 - Has established a statutory ticketing scheme which enables the multi operator bus and rail MCard products available by smartcard and an app. The MCard is managed by a joint venture company owned by the Combined Authority, bus and rail operators
 - Has established a Bus Information Strategy and provides Metro branded contact centre, website, journey planner, real time passenger information system and bus stop information jointly funded with bus operators
 - Owns and operates Metro branded bus stations, interchanges, travel centres and bus shelters
- 2.12 The Combined Authority seeks to play a proactive role in bus service provision acting as a customer advocate. In 2017 it established the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy following extensive consultation. This set out a 25 year vision for bus services in the region. The CA has established the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance as a voluntary partnership with bus operators to deliver the strategy.
- 2.13 The pandemic has had a significant economic effect on the bus services requiring public funds to sustain a service whilst passenger numbers were badly affected by lockdown restrictions. Earlier in 2021, Government established a National Bus Strategy which seeks to support bus services and has asked all LTAs to draw up a Bus Service Improvement Plan for submission in autumn 2021.

- 2.14 Since becoming a Mayoral Combined Authority earlier this year, the Combined Authority now has mayoral powers to make a bus franchising scheme. The Mayor has pledged to “*bring buses back into public control, introduce simpler fares, contactless ticketing and greener buses*”. To do so, the Combined Authority would need to prepare and publish an Assessment of the need for a Franchising Scheme (essentially a business plan), subject the Assessment to independent audit and instigate a public consultation. This process will take around two years to arrive at a decision point on franchising with procurement and implementation to follow.
- 2.15 In parallel the recommendation to approve the notice of intent to develop an Enhanced Partnership will deliver benefits to passengers in the short term. The Enhanced Partnership will set clear targets and standards to ensure it furthers the overall bus strategy aims increasing patronage and through that securing the wider goals of inclusivity and carbon reduction. As the assessment for Franchising will be developed alongside the Enhanced Partnership then if the Enhanced Partnership does not achieve its aims, then this would provide evidence to support a decision to progress with a Franchising Scheme. It is expected that the Enhanced Partnership will be included as part of the assessment for a bus franchising scheme.

The Combined Authority’s Role In Rail

- 2.16 Train services are specified and overseen by the Department for Transport. Track, stations and infrastructure are managed by Network Rail. Implementation of the recent Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail will establish a new co-ordinating body called Great British Railways. With respect to Governance, the Williams-Shapps plan states that: “Local railway managers will be scrutinised by local politicians through joint governance arrangements to provide clear accountability locally in areas where such arrangements are appropriate¹.”
- 2.17 Further detail on the involvement of local leaders in rail and other transport services and the levers available to them will be set out in the levelling up white paper in due course. For now, Government has agreed a partnership agreement with Transport for the North to jointly oversee the commissioning of local rail services, however the final decision rests with the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 2.18 The Combined Authority’s role is to influence future rail policy and investment and to progress the regions’ interest in the development of strategic, pan-Northern schemes such as HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Government’s rail investment strategies in the awaited Integrated Rail Plan. As a member of Transport for the North, the Combined Authority exercises a level of influence through its Rail North Committee in the following areas:
- Co-ordination of investment of planning activity
 - Co-investing in rail facilities and services

¹ [Great British Railways \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) (page 41)

- Integrated strategy-making
- Holding the railway to account on behalf of passengers

2.19 Whilst it is recognised that much of this work will be carried out at a pan-northern level, it is vital that work is undertaken that reflects the specific needs of the West Yorkshire region. Whilst it is not a statutory requirement to produce a rail strategy, the Combined Authority recognises the important role that rail plays within West Yorkshire, not just linking up not just the larger towns and cities, but also the numerous settlements.

2.20 To provide support and technical evidence for and context to, the role of rail and the need to influence it at a local and national level a new rail strategy for the West Yorkshire region is being developed that focuses on:

Local Priorities	Representing local priorities for rail considering the challenges and opportunities faced in the region
The Role of Rail	Establishing the role of rail within the wider transport mix for the region across the short, medium and longer terms
Local Issues	Developing proposals that reflect local priorities and the spatial aspects that make the region unique
The Role of the region	Looking beyond the boundaries to consider the role of the region within the wider Northern and national context.

2.21 In addition, the Combined Authority oversees one of the largest programmes of rail related investment activity of any city region. We have invested over £43 million of local funds to secure projects with a value of almost £70 million in the last 10 years. We have programme commitments of over £182 million of locally controlled funds to secure projects with a value more than £220 million.

2.22 By focusing on the issues above and continuing to oversee and drive these levels of investment the Combined Authority can ensure that rail can play a significant role in delivering against the long-term economic, social, and environmental ambitions that are in place for the region.

The Combined Authority's Role In Active Travel

2.23 The Combined Authority has established the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for West Yorkshire and co-ordinates bids to Government for funding cycling and walking schemes most of which are delivered through the district Councils. The Combined Authority has co-ordinated the City Connect programme which includes the Leeds Bradford Cycle Superhighway.

The Combined Authority's Role In Roads

2.24 The respective Councils are the statutory Highway Authorities however the Combined Authority has some powers and roles in this regard.

- There is an Memorandum of Understanding in place between the Combined Authority Districts to manage an identified network of regionally significant roads, the “ Key Route Network”.
- There has been a project funded through the Combined Authority for a joint Urban Traffic Management Centre. To provide a consistent UTMC service across West Yorkshire.
- Funding for roads maintenance is now part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement for which the CA is the accountable body with delivery by the district Highway Authorities.
- With the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner becoming part of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority all Police and Crime Commissioner functions are now the responsibility of the Mayor, including approach to road safety.

The Combined Authority’s Role In Transport Investment

- 2.25 The Combined Authority acts as the accountable body for the following transport investment funding programmes provided by Government and has established an Assurance Process to ensure schemes have a robust business case and delivery process.
- West Yorkshire plus Transport Fund.
 - Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme.
 - Transforming Cities Fund (Tranche 1 and Tranche 2).
 - Integrated Transport Block, for which the cumulative total of the financial approval and tolerance threshold is over £3,000,000.
 - City Connect.
 - Active travel.
 - Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) Taxi Scheme.
 - Clean Bus Technology Fund.
 - Ultra-Low Emissions Bus Scheme.
- 2.26 This role requires the Combined Authority to bid for an negotiate with Government on future funding and is currently engaged with Government to seek a five year funding package under the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.
- 2.27 As part of the Settlement, the Combined Authority is looking to secure funding for a mass transit system. The vision for the mass transit programme was set out in a Mass Transit Vision published in January. Mass transit is a large-scale public transport system. Typically, Mass transit would use one or more of modern high-capacity buses, trams and tram-train vehicles. The Combined Authority is working on a Strategic Outline Business Case to consider which places to connect by mass transit and the potential technologies which are most likely to be appropriate for West Yorkshire.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 This report summarises the role of the Combined Authority in influencing the carbon emissions from transport aiming to achieve the regional target of being net zero carbon by 2038, with significant progress by 2030

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 An effective transport network which enables people access employment and training is key to facilitating inclusive growth

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 It is vital that the Combined Authority uses its influence to ensure transport provision and facilities which are accessible and welcoming for all members of the community.

6. Financial Implications

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

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 Transport Scrutiny Committee notes the overview provided in this report enabling it to shape the future work of the Committee.

11. Background Documents

None.

12. Appendices

None.