

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BRADFORD DISTRICT CONSULTATION SUB-COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 22 MARCH 2021**

Present:

Councillor Taj Salam (Chair)	Transport Committee
Councillor Sinead Engel	Transport Committee
Councillor Hassan Khan	Transport Committee
James Craig (Public Representative)	Public Representative
David Hill (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Andrew Jewsbury (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Peter Ketley (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Graham Peacock (Public Representative)	Public Representative
John Prestage (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Keith Renshaw (Public Representative)	Public Representative
Barrie Rigg (Public Representative)	Public Representative

In attendance:

Dwayne Wells	Arriva Yorkshire
Kim Purcell	Arriva Yorkshire
Mohammed Raja	First Group
Jim Craven	Transdev
Pete Myers	Northern Trains
Andrew Bradley	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
James Nutter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Tom Gifford	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dominic Martin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

40. Open Forum

No questions or concerns had been raised from members of the public prior to the meeting.

41. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Pennington, Gareth Logan, Norah McWilliam, and Graham Meiklejohn.

42. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Sinead Engel had been appointed Chair of Bradford Council's Education Appeals panel, which assesses applications from parents to fund their child's school transport costs. This would be added to her register of interests after the meeting.

43. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items which required the exclusion of the press or public.

44. Workshop Session - Connectivity Infrastructure Plan

The Sub-Committee heard a presentation on the Combined Authority's Connectivity Infrastructure Plan, setting out a long-term transport infrastructure investment programme for the next 20 years. Feedback was being sought on all aspects of the plan and elected members of Bradford District Council had been invited to participate in the workshop as part of the public engagement process.

The plan constituted a series of documents bringing bus, active travel, rail, mass transit, and future mobility together into a single integrated plan for the region, with plans and proposals supported by a series of evidence reports.

Sub-Committee members raised the following questions and comments:

- Greater integration between different operators and between different modes of transport would be a crucial part of future development.
- Had environmental issues been considered in the planning of new transport lanes, particularly in terms of flooding risk?
- Would public comments on the Bradford Local Plan be shared with the Combined Authority to help inform the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan? Officers advised that they had been working closely with Bradford Council officers and sharing information; Local Plans were vital for understanding future growth opportunities.
- What could be done to make cyclists feel safer on the road, and what could be done to improve access to cycling for people from low-income backgrounds/people with disabilities? It was suggested these questions be taken to the upcoming Walking and Cycling webinar for a more comprehensive response.
- Difficulties existed for young people accessing certain specialist educational settings via public transport, such as Craven College or Askham Bryan in North Yorkshire. Were these links being examined? Similarly, lack of a bus service between Skipton and Silsden caused difficulties for Silsden residents attending school or college in Skipton.
- Could the proposed timescale of all neighbourhoods being easily accessible by cycling and walking by 2040 be brought forward? Current timescales were driven by funding availability from central government, but there was a strong desire to achieve this as soon as possible.
- Omissions were discussed on proposed route maps, including the Keighley Worth Valley train line and routes to Hebden Bridge. The bus network review examined future bus travel demand in closer detail than the overview given at the meeting and addressed these concerns.

- Haworth should be made more visible in the plan's map due to its importance as a tourist destination in the district, particularly in light of Bradford's 2025 bid to become the City of Culture.
- Impediments to walking, including damage to pavements, lack of protection from vehicles mounting the kerb, and lack of priority at junctions needed to be addressed.
- Moving members of the public away from car use would be a challenge without replicating some of the functionality and flexibility that car use afforded them, such as bringing home large amounts of shopping or for an emergency pick-up in the middle of the night.
- Two-way rail traffic between Shipley and Guiseley to improve service frequency on the Wharfedale line was suggested, potentially in the form of a passing place rather a dual line.
- The work to upgrade tow-paths in the district was praised, and the need for ongoing maintenance and the funding required was discussed.
- Issues with vehicles parking in cycling lanes in Bierley were noted.

Resolved: That the presentation and the Sub-Committee's feedback be noted.

45. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 be approved.

46. Chair's Update

The Chair noted that the on-going situation was still a challenging one, with bus patronage levels remaining quite low despite nearly 90% of all services running. The recent news of £3 billion in Government funding allocated to bus strategy was welcomed by the Sub-Committee, but it was noted that the mayoral elections were due to take place in May and it would remain to be seen how this would impact transport strategy going forward.

The Cycling and Walking Working Group had been renamed to the Active Travel Working Group, and were continuing their work on improving the accessibility of cycling and walking in the region.

The Chair also reminded members of that Sub-Committee that the draft Bradford Local Plan was still in its consultation process and requested that they encourage any feedback to the plan.

47. Information Report

The Government Bus Strategy had been published the previous week. Recovery was emphasised as a key focus of the strategy, and partnership with the bus operators would be vital going forward in order to access the available funding.

Bus patronage had fallen dramatically during the pandemic, and even optimistic predictions for longer-term recovery were currently around 80% of

pre-pandemic levels. Ensuring that bus travel was an attractive option would be an important challenge going forward.

It was noted that the Combined Authority had not made any application for franchising; notwithstanding any changes brought on by upcoming elections, the Combined Authority was instead pursuing an enhanced partnership with transport operators. This would involve an increased sharing of decision-making powers and a position of greater responsibility for the operators, the Combined Authority, and also the district councils, in order to work together in an effort to improve the bus offer through measures ranging from integrated, simpler and potentially cheaper ticketing through to implementing bus priority measures.

The Combined Authority had been liaising with the Department for Transport regarding funding during the recovery stage, and funding had been agreed with transport operators until the end of June 2021, with a ramp-up of services as non-essential retail opened again from 12 April 2021. After June, the next steps would likely be determined through the work surrounding the enhanced partnership.

It was noted that work on the Emergency Active Travel Fund was ongoing, and a consultation activity would take place over the next few months to progress this further.

Resolved: That the information report and the Sub-Committee's comments be noted.

48. Operator Updates

Northern Trains

Northern Trains reported on difficulties over the past year in training drivers while still maintaining social distancing. Through work with trade unions and safety advisors a new method of training had begun shortly after Christmas and was working well, and the additional cover from newly-trained drivers had allowed Northern Trains to put all new trains into operation in Bradford.

Patronage levels were currently between 15-20% of normal pre-Covid numbers, with the return to school having increased these figures somewhat. Northern Trains thanked the Combined Authority for their recent help in providing standby buses from Guiseley to assist young people getting home after school, and these extra buses would remain in place.

A summer timetable would be introduced on 16 May 2021, and would be designed to support the efforts to return to normalcy post-Covid. Demand was expected to increase, particularly in the leisure market, and services would go back to an almost full level during the day with more staff deployed to support this. Connections to the coast and leisure spots such as the Dales, Ilkley, etc, were expected to be in-demand and adequate coverage would need to be put in place.

The performance of trains at the current level of service was reported as good,

with over 90% of trains arriving at their destination within three minutes of the expected time.

Arriva

Arriva reported that timetables had been reduced in February in response to a request from the Department for Transport to reduce mileage. Monday-Friday service levels had since been restored to 100% of pre-pandemic levels. Saturday service remained at a reduced level, but this was planned to return to pre-pandemic levels once non-essential retail had opened. Reduced capacity due to social distancing was still in effect, but extra journeys were in place to support the busiest routes, particularly surrounding journeys to and from schools.

It was noted that staff absences had been at a heightened level due to Covid-19, but Arriva remained fully staffed to deliver all registered services.

FirstGroup

FirstGroup reported that they had resumed a full Monday-Friday service, and advised the Sub-Committee that all vehicles were compliant with government guidance and were cleaned every 28 days to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Passenger numbers had dropped slightly since the previous meeting and were at around 45% of pre-pandemic levels, but were expected to rise again soon due to both the recent return of many pupils to school as well as the upcoming re-opening of non-essential retail. It was also noted that FirstGroup were currently slightly under their establishment figure, and were in the process of recruiting new bus drivers to address this.

An issue raised at the last meeting regarding unexpected roadworks by Northern Power Grid causing route closures had since been resolved, and FirstGroup were working closely with Northern Power Grid on the laying of new cables. These works had caused some congestion, particularly around the Manningham Lane and Oak Lane area, but once completed the remaining phases of work should have only a minor impact on services.

The Sub-Committee was informed of an on-going problem with vandalism in the Bradford South area. FirstGroup were still working with the local police and the MP for Bradford South to combat this, but a number of measures had already been put in place, including increased patrols by police, as well as drivers being able to report this vandalism under 999 to get an immediate response. It was reported that the district councillors for Tong ward had also met with police to discuss this and had been encouraged by the police response.

Transdev

Transdev reported that they were increasing service levels from the 11th of April on the 60 Aire route and the 662 shuttle, which would return overall service almost to pre-pandemic levels.

New vehicles had been introduced on the 66 Dalesway service, and the Wharfedale links service had been rebranded. The Sub-Committee was also advised of the measures being undertaken to keep vehicles clean, including nightly fogging and cleaning after every trip.

The Sub-Committee discussed the vandalism issues that had been reported, and questioned how notice of any impact to service was passed on to the public. Members also discussed the shock and stress that such incidents could cause to drivers, and operators provided more information on what support measures were available to drivers in such circumstances. It was also noted that the Combined Authority was responsible for repairing any damage to bus stops, and officers requested that any vandalism be reported immediately to Metroline so that it could be dealt with.

The following questions and comments were raised by the Sub-Committee:

- Capacity issues on buses were highlighted, with buses sometimes unable to pick up new passengers without passing legal limits. Social distancing was a strong factor in this, and it was hoped that these restrictions would be eased as we moved into summer, when demand was expected to increase.
- Members were informed of a large piece of on-going work involving making multi-operator ticketing cheaper and more accessible to young people. This was expected to be introduced toward the end of spring.
- The announcement of a new Northern Powerhouse Rail station in Bradford was noted, which could mean shorter journey times to Leeds and Manchester.
- An issue was raised regarding children receiving detention or taking part in extra-curricular activities at school and potentially missing their bus and then facing difficulties getting home. It was noted that many young people were not well-versed in using public transport and depending on where they lived it could be difficult to find a route home and could involve multiple buses. Combined Authority officers would discuss with education transport colleagues whether a safeguarding issue potentially existed and report back.

Resolved: That the operators be thanked for their updates.