

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 27 MAY 2022 AT COMMITTEE ROOM A, WELLINGTON
HOUSE, LEEDS**

Present:

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Chair)	Bradford 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 Rizwana Jamil	Bradford Council
Councillor Daniel Sutherland	Calderdale Council

In attendance:

Councillor Eric Firth	Kirklees Council
Councillor Kevin Swift	Wakefield Council
Councillor Melanie Jones	Wakefield Council
Mark Roberts	Beer Hawk Ltd
Brandon Jones	First Group
Pete Myers	Northern Trains
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Liz Hunter	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ian Parr	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

63. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Cunningham, Cllr D'Agorne, Cllr Hayden, Cllr Salam, and Cllr Scullion

64. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared during the meeting.

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

Resolved: That in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Appendix 1 to Agenda Item 8 on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information and for the reasons

set out in the report that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

66. Minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 4 March 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority held on 4 March 2022 be approved.

67. Bus Service Improvement Plan

Officers noted that the Bus Service Improvement Plan has been in development since the Summer of 2021 and was submitted in October 2021. Updates have been presented at multiple Transport Committee meetings in the intervening period, with the latest report seeking the Committee's approval of the next steps in the process.

Officers explained that a portion of the BSIP funding will go towards the reduction and simplification of bus fares across West Yorkshire, with a single ticket costing a maximum of £2 and a daily ticket capped at £4.50. The price and flexibility of MCards will also be reviewed, as commuters are more commonly buying day tickets to suit flexible home and office working patterns. More work with operators will be undertaken to reduce the impact on travellers who are required to take split journeys, including those travelling with multiple operators. Members agreed the need to support travellers with reduced fares in light of the rising cost of living.

It was queried why there is a gap between the £400 million initially sought by the Combined Authority and the £70 million that has been awarded. Officers confirmed that the figure of £70 million over three years awarded is still amongst the highest awarded to any authority. The disparity resulted from there originally being no upper limit for applications upon opening, and the reduction of the overall budget being cut from £3 billion to £1.2 billion.

Members asked how else passenger numbers will be recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Officers responded that it is difficult to suggest any single method that will improve passenger levels, however by focusing on more seamless services, improved reliability, and wider coverage, more passengers should return to buses as a desirable way to travel. Officers confirmed that broad engagement will take place with communities under the title 'The Big Bus Chat' beginning in June 2022 which will inform the direction taken in the next BSIP review. The Mayor will be involved in the events, and the schedule is currently being drawn up. There is also the Mayor's Free Bus Day on Sunday 5 June, which will promote bus travel across the region. Free Bus Days have on previous occasions resulted in a lift of 12% on traveller numbers when compared with the average passenger levels on the preceding four Sundays.

Resolved: The Transport Committee:

Approved the approach to the spend of the BSIP funding.

Endorsed the intention to seek agreement with operators to deliver these initiatives through the Enhanced Partnership in preparation for submission in draft to the DfT on the 30th June 2022.

Endorsed the approach to public engagement to support next steps in development and delivery of the BSIP.

68. The State of the Bus Network

Officers introduced the report, summarising the various challenges faced by bus operators over the pandemic, including a reduction in passenger numbers, fuel supply issues, and staff shortages among others. There has been recovery since the end of the pandemic restrictions and the Combined Authority has provided support and resources to alleviate issues wherever possible. Operators have been required to use their resources more effectively, and the challenge will continue when Government grants are ended in October 2022. Bus operator representatives in attendance confirmed that there have been challenges, though the situation is stabilising. Improved pay structures are focusing on attracting and retaining staff, and recruitment has been accelerated. New shift patterns have been introduced to improve the work-life balance of staff which should also make it easier for staff to cover absences where necessary.

Members raised concerns regarding the removal of existing services, and questioned if the BSIP funding will be used to support services. Officers explained that the BSIP funding is intended to support improvements to the network, but there are alternative means to support operators such as utilising the Adult Education Budget to support training new drivers. There are also other avenues to explore about how new and existing funding may be allocated, such as the CRSTS to create new bus priority routes. Reviewing the network will identify the need for change to support communities that are not well served by the existing arrangements.

Resolved: The Transport Committee:

Noted the existing challenges to the bus network and that a further report be submitted outlining the outcome of the Network Sustainability Review.

Endorsed the approach to creating a five year Bus Network Plan

69. Bus Reform Assessment

Officers noted the bus reform objectives, which are running in parallel with BSIP and other projects, and asked members for their feedback and suggestions.

Members queried the flexibility of the available franchising options given in the report. Officers responded that there are alternative options, though the ones laid out are similar to existing schemes in other countries as well as in London, and assessment has taken place in the Greater Manchester region.

There is more learning that can be gained from other authorities, and future updates can help to elaborate further.

Resolved: The Transport Committee:

Endorsed the overview of the Case for Change.

Approved the bus reform objectives and options for detailed assessment.

Noted the programme update and next steps.

70. Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Pilot Bid

Officers explained the report which proposes submitting a bid to the LEVI fund by the deadline of 17 June, which will support electric vehicle charging infrastructure particularly for those without off street parking.

Members raised the lack of options considered in the report, and the need to consider multiple types of property in urban and rural areas around West Yorkshire. Officers noted that this LEVI bid has some particular limitations that make broader considerations more difficult, but there are other funding pots available for bidding even if this bid is unsuccessful. More updates can be provided in future reports presented to the committee.

Members questioned what has been learned from other authorities and how the available data is being used. Officers confirmed that the Combined Authority is working with national data, which can be helpful to make generalisations on a regional level. There is an opportunity to work with industry which can provide more insight into trends and customer need. Authorities are working in similar ways to achieve the goal of improving the infrastructure, and officers are consistently seeking and sharing new ideas to ensure best practice.

Resolved: The Transport Committee:

Noted the West Yorkshire LEVI Pilot Proposal under development with District Partners through the West Yorkshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy Officer Group.

Approved the submission of the bid and delegates the final submission to the Managing Director in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of the Transport Committee in June 2022.

71. Summary of Transport Schemes

Members considered the report outlining ongoing schemes in the West Yorkshire region.

Resolved: The Transport Committee noted the report.