

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 14 December 2022

Subject: **Passenger Experience Update Report**

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To provide a regular update on the performance of the transport network in West Yorkshire, including an update of the Combined Authority's passenger facing activity.

2. Information

Summary Picture

- 2.1 The recovery of travel demand following the pandemic has stabilised with the strongest recovery during off-peak hours and weekends. An increase in peak commuting has been observed this autumn stronger on midweek days.

Bus Network

- 2.2 Local bus patronage currently stands at 84% of the pre-pandemic baseline (first week of March 2020, **Appendix 1**). Service reliability continues to be impacted by the reduced availability of bus drivers and engineers. Bus operators advise that they continue to have higher vacancies than they would normally experience. Whilst recruiting new drivers remains challenging issues regarding licencing and testing are easing. This has given rise to reductions in service frequency and short-term cancellations. The Combined Authority is funding training for new bus drivers through the Adult Education Budget.

- 2.3 Transport Committee considered bus service punctuality and reliability at its meeting on 18 November and expressed concern that service delivery remains comparatively poor. Further monitoring is under way with a further report to be brought back to the Committee in the spring.
- 2.4 As reported elsewhere in these papers, bus services have been sustained throughout the pandemic by a combination of Government and Local Government funding. A Government condition of Covid funding was to undertake a review, jointly with bus operators, of the financial sustainability of the bus network following the predicted end of Covid funding in October 2022. Transport Committee were advised that 11% of bus mileage would not be commercially viable when funding ends. The minor recovery of patronage in the autumn is unlikely to have mitigated this situation.
- 2.5 The Mayor and Leaders successfully lobbied government for an extension of this funding. On 19 August Government announced that funding will be extended for until 2023/24. Whilst the extended funding has prevented a widespread loss of service in October 2022, First and Arriva implemented some reductions in service frequencies and amended routes week beginning 2nd October. The Mayor has raised her concerns about the social impact of this to these bus companies to express her concern over these reductions.
- 2.6 The extended funding expires at the end of March 2023 and at the time of writing, Government has not indicated that it will continue. Operators must notify by February of any intentions to make service changes in early April. If further services become at risk as a result of funding cuts, the detail of the services at risk will emerge early in 2023.

Mayor's Fares

- 2.7 The "Mayor's Fares" were launched on 4 September 2022 with single tickets and days savers being capped at £2 and £4.50 respectively. An extensive promotional campaign has been undertaken to raise awareness of the initiative and a further campaign is underway for the festive period.
- 2.8 It was reported to the October Committee that bus patronage was less than 80% of the pre pandemic baseline, this has now increased to 84% indicating that the Mayor's Fares will have contributed to growth. A full appraisal of the first three months of operation of Mayor's Fares will be presented to the Committee in the new year.

Rail Network

- 2.9 Northern reports patronage at around 88% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Commuter levels are reported at approximately 60% based on season ticket sales; commuters will also be using other ticket types, so the recovery rate will be higher. Commuters are showing a tendency to travel mid-week and for a few days a week. However, leisure demand remains high at over 100% pre-Covid demand on weekends. Overall, Northern reports revenue has recovered to pre-pandemic levels and now in overall growth.

- 2.10 The next rail timetable change came into effect on Sunday, 11 December 2022. A summary of the main changes was provided to October's Transport Committee meeting. Officers have been pressing operators on the readiness for the timetable change and have had assurances on this. Overall, the changes are welcome, marking a reinstatement by Northern of many services that were withdrawn earlier in the year to allow a backlog in training to be accommodated in the context of no rest day working agreement.
- 2.11 Rail strikes continue to impact the rail network. National RMT strikes are planned on Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 14 December 2022 and then on Friday 16 and Saturday 17 December 2022. Further action is expected on Tuesday 3 and Wednesday 4 January 2023 and on Friday 6 and Saturday 7 January 2023.
- 2.12 RMT has also called an overtime ban from 18 December to 2 January which will put further pressure on operators and Network Rail, particularly over the Christmas period. The rail industry is working through the implications of this with the risk that it could lead to significant passenger disruption over the holiday period.
- 2.13 The Rail North Committee on 15 November had reassurances from industry that it can deliver more reliable services from the December timetable change. The Committee resolved to hold operators accountable for delivering against this.
- 2.14 Poor punctuality and reliability of rail services was discussed at length by Transport Committee at its meeting on 18 November.
- 2.15 Together with other Mayors from across the North, Tracy Brabin met with the new Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper, on 30 November about rail reliability. Mayors underlined the short-term need to reinstate a rest day working agreement with drivers, and to support a structured response to driver recruitment, training and retention in the longer term. The meeting was constructive, with the Secretary of State confirming that he understands the scale and impact of disruption, and the need for improvements.
- 2.16 The performance reports for Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE) are included in **Appendix 2**, which includes a description of the different performance measures mentioned below.

Passenger Satisfaction and Attitudes

Combined Authority Surveys

- 2.17 Fieldwork for the 8th wave of the Combined Authorities own COVID-19 Transport Recovery Survey was completed between 11th - 24th October 2022. This telephone survey series involves a representative sample of 1,000 West Yorkshire residents aged 16 and over (with quotas for age, gender, district and ethnicity). The results of this survey (shown in **Appendix 3**), provide the very latest insight on West Yorkshire residents travel choices as we continue to recover from the pandemic, including which modes they use, how their travel is expected to change, their views on home working and commuting in

the long term. In addition, this latest wave features questions about travel choices specifically in relation to the cost-of-living crisis. The headlines from this research include:

- Concern about using public transport in relation to COVID-19 continues to fall; 62% say they are not at all concerned, although 1 in 13 (8%) still say they are very concerned.
- The share of workers exclusively home-working has fallen (now fewer than 1 in 10), whilst exclusive office working has risen.
- Around one third of workers are hybrid working and that trend looks set to stay.
- For those who are working at home some or all of the time, sentiments are clear; 82% report a positive experience, with over half saying its 'very positive', with more women than men reporting this.
- Overall, people expect to travel more in a year's time than they do now (for a range of purposes).
- In terms of commuting, workers do not expect their commuting frequency to change much a year from now, with only a subtle net increase in commuting frequency reported.
- The train is viewed much more positively than bus; respondents were twice as likely to have a positive view of the train than a negative view. On balance, people who do not use the bus had more negative views than positive, whilst the opposite is true for people who do not use the train.
- The stand-out reason for negative perceptions of both bus and train was reliability and punctuality.
- 1 in 5 people say they are confident cycling in most or all situations (with more men than women saying this), whilst in contrast 2 in 5 say they are not confident cycling.
- People expect to walk more and use motorised modes less in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

Transport Focus Surveys

- 2.18 Throughout the pandemic, Transport Focus conducted nationally representative research around travel use. The latest iteration of this research now uses omnibus survey where 2000 members of the public are screened to identify bus and rail users outside of London, with weightings applied to make the results nationally representative of Great Britain. Reports are now published monthly, and a link is provided in **Background Documents**.

2.19 The latest insights from surveys published on the 18 November are:

- 86% of bus and 84% of rail passengers were satisfied with their journey overall.
- For bus, over the last two survey waves, satisfaction with the frequency of buses increased from 61% to 68%.
- Comparisons between bus and rail reveal, bus passengers have higher satisfaction with crowding/level of space, and value for money (66% vs 59% but lower satisfaction on punctuality/reliability (71% vs 76%).
- 93% of recent rail passengers and 90% of recent bus passengers reported feeling safe in relation to COVID-19; these figures drop to 80% and 73% for people who hadn't used the train or bus recently respectively.

Updates on Combined Authority Activity

Current Usage Indicators

- 2.20 **Appendix 4** includes a summary of several usage indicators of Combined Authority "Metro" branded activity which give a comparison between current levels of demand and trends, including to the pre-pandemic position where available.
- 2.21 Use of services continues to be impacted by reduction in travel arising from the pandemic, although demand for travel information is increasing alongside increasing patronage. In October 2022, calls into Metroline call centre were at 98% of pre-pandemic levels (October 2019) and weekly weekday Metro and MCard website page views are nearing pre-pandemic levels (currently 9% lower than pre-pandemic).

Bus Stations

- 2.22 Work to ensure safeguarding of vulnerable customers and to increase responsiveness to community needs continue across all bus stations with staff undertaking child protection, suicide prevention and dementia awareness training. In November, bus stations became deposit points for local food banks.
- 2.23 In November, new Travel Centre was opened on the upper bus concourse Bradford Interchange relocated from the lower to the upper concourse bringing the facility closer to its customers the majority of whom are bus passengers.

Boxing Day Bus Services

2.24 The Combined Authority will fund to provision of all bus services on Boxing Day Monday 26 December. Buses will operate as follows over the holiday period;

- Saturday 24 December – Normal Saturday service with services reducing after 18:00, and no service after 20:00.
- Sunday 25 December – Only local volunteer run services.
- Monday 26 December Boxing Day – Special Boxing Day services will be funded by the Authority and operate on main corridors between approximately 0900 – 1800.
- Tuesday 27 December – Bank Holiday – Sunday service.
- Wednesday 28 December – Saturday service.
- Thursday 29 December – Saturday service.
- Friday 30 December – Saturday service.
- Saturday 31 December – Normal Saturday service with services reducing after 18:00, and no service after 20:00.
- Sunday 1 January – Only local volunteer run services.
- Monday 2 January – Bank Holiday – Sunday service.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 Air quality improved during the periods of lower traffic levels during the lockdowns in the pandemic. 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. This effect has now levelled off.
- 3.2 An important element of the Transport Recovery Plan agreed in 2020 is to try to embed increased levels of active travel and the opportunity to restore and grow public transport use to maintain improved air quality and achieve decarbonisation ambitions.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 Sustaining an effective, stable and affordable public transport network is crucial in ensuring the post pandemic economic recovery is inclusive particularly to communities with limited access to private transport.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 Ensuring an effective, stable, and affordable public transport network is important for equality and diversity.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 As reported on an accompanying report, inflationary pressures arising from fuel and wage cost growth are impacting on the Combined Authority and bus operators.

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 notes the updates provided on the Passenger Experience in West Yorkshire provided in this report.

11. Background Documents

Transport Recovery Plan, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, 27 July 2020, available via this link:

<https://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=133&MIId=963&Ver=4>

The Combined Authority continues to produce a regular *West Yorkshire Economic and Transport Insights Report*. This includes information and analysis on public transport patronage and is available via this link:

<https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/economic-monitor/>.

A regularly updated transport and economic recovery dashboard is available via this link:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiaNTA5ZjZlZWQtdNDdiOS00ZGNiLTlINmQtNWZmZmQ0ZDBkMjRiliwidCI6IjM0ZTkzYmZjLWVlNjYtNDM0NS1hNGZILTgwNWl2N2U0ODBjMCI6ImMiOjh9>

Transport Focus publish regular bus and rail passenger satisfaction surveys of These can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publications/>

The Combined Authority's COVID-19 transport survey results are published here: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/covid-19-transport-survey/>

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Insights on transport network use

Appendix 2 – Rail network performance data

Appendix 3 – COVID-19 Transport Recovery Survey (wave 8)

Appendix 4 – Metro branded activity measures