

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 10 MARCH 2023 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS**

Present:

Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Chair)	Bradford Council
Councillor Peter Carlill (Deputy Chair)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw	Bradford Council
Councillor Colin Hutchinson (Transport Engagement Lead)	Calderdale Council
Councillor Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Councillor Martyn Bolt	Kirklees Council
Councillor Eric Firth	Kirklees Council
Councillor Neil Buckley	Leeds City Council
Councillor Helen Hayden	Leeds City Council
Councillor Annie Maloney	Leeds City Council
Councillor Eleanor Thomson	Leeds City Council
Councillor Izaak Wilson (Transport Engagement Lead)	Leeds City Council
Councillor Kevin Swift (Transport Engagement Lead)	Wakefield Council
Councillor Andy D'Agorne	City of York Council

In attendance:

Mick Bunting	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Haskins	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Jonathan Rogers	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Ian Parr	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

58. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Amir Hussain, Cllr Aafaq Butt, Cllr Peter Caffrey, Cllr Peter Clarke, Cllr Melanie Jones, Cllr Manisha Kaushik, Cllr Hassan Khan and Cllr Matthew McLoughlin.

59. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

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

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public.

61. Minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 10 February 2023

A member requested that an error in the attendance list for the previous meeting be corrected.

Resolved: That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the Transport Committee held on 10 February 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair.

62. Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

Members received a report seeking approval of the Passenger Charter for bus services required as part of the Bus Services Improvement Plan, and to provide an update on bus infrastructure funding relating to the recently successful Levelling up Fund bid.

Officers noted that the outcome of the Mayor's Big Bus Chat consultation, as discussed at the previous meeting, was now available on the West Yorkshire Combined Authority website.

Officers explained the draft text of the new passenger charter had been made available to members. The charter was a requirement of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and had been developed in tandem by operators and officers. The Charter had taken on board feedback from a variety of consultations and working groups and set out the standards to be expected by all bus users in West Yorkshire and also directed users to how a complaint could be made if necessary. The final draft was presented to the Bus Alliance in January and, if approved, could be fully designed for publication by 20 March 2023. Transport Focus had been consulted for formatting guidance in line with national standards and had provided positive feedback regarding the content. The finalised charter would be made available in hard copy in transport hubs and other key transport locations, and also made available online through QR codes and web links posted at all bus stops and stations.

Members noted the importance of complaints information being made accessible to customers, and the need for a consistent response and approach from all operators to address issues. Members agreed with the principles and emphasised that they could still be built upon to improve further. It was noted that more remote areas of West Yorkshire received phone signal and so hard copies of the charter and bus timetables must be available where QR codes and online links were unreliable. Officers noted that the volatile nature of bus timetables throughout the pandemic, and to this day, have made it difficult to post up-to-date timetables when services change, but there was more that could be done to ensure users in rural areas were not disadvantaged.

Members queried how some of the qualitative aspects of the charter would be measured, officers responded that qualitative and quantitative data was received from a variety of sources and acted upon. Quantitative data could be analysed by officers as usual and used to inform reports as appropriate. For qualitative data, the Combined Authority worked closely with Transport Focus who conduct national surveys of transport users for support and guidance. The results were not always able to be broken down into the same level of detail as with statistical data, however, the data was useful when compared with that of similar authorities and more could still be done to improve its efficacy. Members noted that online surveys were more likely to capture the views of younger demographics and those with access to the appropriate technology and suggested a text or call option also be made available. Officers confirmed that equality and diversity impact assessments were completed for all schemes, and that the final design would be as accessible as possible. There already existed a phone contact centre called 'Metroline' where passengers were able to report damaged bus shelters, which could be made more visible to customers.

Members queried if the passenger charter covered any elements of antisocial behaviour that can occur on buses. Officers noted that the BSIP funding would allow for more police community support officers on buses and that there was more that could be done separately to further tackle the issue.

Members questioned the use of the word 'should' as opposed to 'will' at various points within the charter, as well as the lack of ability for bus passengers to claim for a cancelled service in a similar way train passengers could when their arrival at work was disrupted. Members suggested that a preferred taxi operator be designated which could then invoice the bus operator for the fare where passengers did not expect to require a taxi. Officers responded there was already a similar system and operators already agreed not to cancel the final service of the day, except for the case of an unforeseen emergency.

Members noted the challenge of growing passengers when operators were consistently reducing services. However, the agreement of the charter showed they were willing to commit to high-quality services as much as possible and the charter should not be used to punish any missed targets in favour of developing higher standards. Many elements of the BSIP would contribute to service improvements and would be reviewed each year to ensure targets were met and to make any necessary revisions. Officers noted that quarterly meetings were already arranged with the relevant working groups and would feed into the yearly review.

Resolved: That the adoption of the West Yorkshire Bus Passenger Charter be approved.

63. Passenger Experience Update

Members received a report providing a quarterly update on the performance of the transport network in West Yorkshire, including an update on the Combined Authority's passenger facing activity.

Officers noted that bus and rail performance seemed to have levelled out at a rate lower than it had been before the pandemic. Service punctuality remained roughly stable, and operators were still reporting some staff shortages affecting performance, as well as congestion. The bus service recovery funding granted to operators by the central government had been extended until the end of June 2023, though unless there were alternative arrangements announced in the Spring budget on 15 March 2023, it was feared that the funding would only delay the need for further cuts. First Bus and other operators had already declared reductions in their timetables, and there was insufficient Combined Authority funding to cover every lost service.

Members noted the majority of service reductions affecting Leeds which had a high impact on communities, since routes directly to and from the city centre were being preferred over routes between communities. Members queried if affected communities should be made aware of impending service cuts and the need to use their existing services, so they were not cut in the future. Members noted that the earliest buses from some communities were operating too late for commuters to arrive at work on time, but operators had reported their staff numbers had recovered to support more services. Members expressed some sympathy for operators who had been forced to act with little forward planning from the government and urged for longer term assurance to provide some certainty. The Chair noted that herself and the Mayor continued to engage with the government to express the needs of the region.

Members noted that the poor coordination of rail services was having a detrimental impact on passengers by cutting services and not re-introducing others as planned, leaving some services to be covered by a replacement bus service. Members questioned the efficacy of the Rail North Partnership and Network Rail in resolving the issues and noted that previous government proposals, such as Great British Railways, seemed to have disappeared with no alternative. The Chair responded that the Deputy Chair, Cllr Kaushik, was aware of the ongoing rail issues and had met with TransPennine and Rail North. The Chair also confirmed that the Mayor had met with the Secretary of State to further push for a resolution.

Officers noted that the underlying theme between the operators was the cost of running services and urged that the region should not be disadvantaged as a result. Bus reliability could still improve, and congestion issues should also ease. The bus operators had already signalled what they would need to do if the recovery funding ended, which gave the Combined Authority some time to consider how the impact could be mitigated.

Members queried if there had been any feedback regarding the improved passenger experience at renovated rail stations. Officers agreed that feedback could be provided at a future meeting.

Members requested greater visibility of useful information at rail stations, which could improve the experience of commuters who travelled multi-modally. Officers noted the available information was taken into

consideration and there were improvements to make, especially where bus services were far or had been moved away from rail stations.

Resolved: That the updates provided on the Passenger Experience in West Yorkshire provided in this report be noted.

64. Project Approvals

Members received a report seeking the progression of, and funding for, projects under Investment Priority 5 – Delivering Sustainable, Inclusive and Affordable Transport.

Officers informed the Committee about the Transforming Cities Fund - Bradford Interchange Station Access scheme, which aimed to develop the existing access to Bradford Interchange into a world-class gateway that enabled a safe, seamless interchange between all transport modes. Improvements would be made to the lower-level concourse, as well as to the area immediately outside the interchange, creating a more attractive and safer environment for users. A new taxi rank would be created, and a walkway developed between the interchange and Hall Ings, allowing for improved connections to the city centre. The development aimed for completion before Bradford's tenure as UK City of Culture 2025 began.

Members noted that the works would significantly improve the surrounding area of the Interchange and also be a positive first impression for first time visitors to the city. The scheme would also encourage more passengers to use bus and rail as well as cycle to and from the city centre.

Members noted the potential detrimental impact of construction on accessibility, as well as by moving the taxi rank and blue badge parking further away from the station. Officers responded that the Combined Authority was working closely with Bradford City Council to engage with accessibility groups and mitigate any impact. It was confirmed that Equality Impact Assessments had been completed in line with the assurance process and that the completed project would be an improvement from the current facilities. Members noted that the increased space and added green elements would improve the accessibility for those who were neurodivergent and should be considered alongside those with physical disabilities.

Members noted the contributions of Combined Authority officer, Kit Allwinter, toward this and many other Combined Authority schemes, and expressed their thanks to him ahead of his move to a new role with Active Travel England.

Resolved: The Transport Committee approved that:

- (i) The TCF Bradford Interchange Access scheme proceed through decision point 3 (outline business case) and work commence on activity 4 (full business case).

- (ii)** Development costs of £2,054,127 be approved in order to progress the scheme to decision point 4 (full business case) taking the total scheme approval to £8,751,849.
- (iii)** The Combined Authority enter into an addendum to the existing funding agreement with City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council for expenditure of up to £8,751,849.
- (iv)** Future approvals be made in accordance with the assurance pathway and approval route outlined in the submitted report. This would be subject to the scheme remaining within the tolerances outlined in the report.