

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY GROUP
26th October, 2022

Present:- Councillor Beck (in the Chair); Councillors Andrews, Aveyard, Bacon, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, A Carter, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, T. Collingham, Griffin, Haleem, Keenan, McNeely, Pitchley and Wyatt and Mrs. D. Fenwick-Green (Brampton Bierlow Parish Council).

Also present were John Young (Stagecoach) and Lisa Maloney (Northern Railways).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brookes, Browne, Cusworth, Elliott, Fisher, Lelliott, Taylor and Yasseen, Mr. C. Jepson (Anston Parish Council) Mrs. J. Hart (Dinnington St. John's Parish Council).

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 27TH JULY, 2022

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th July, 2022.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July, 2022, be approved as a true record of proceedings.

22. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

23. QUESTIONS ON TRANSPORT ISSUES

The Transportation Advisory Group noted the questions and answers on transport matters that had been submitted in advance of the meeting that had been included in the agenda pack.

In response to the question submitted and answer received, Councillor Pitchley felt that the answer regarding the No. 26 bus route had not really addressed the issue around it. A lot of the service users were elderly but had no particular mobility issues other than the fact that they did not drive and would not meet the criteria for Community Transport. The removal of the service was impacting a large community and, whilst appreciating that all the services were struggling, it was of concern when the shopping complex was contacting Ward Councillors expressing their concern.

Agreed:- (1) That more information be requested from SYMCA as to the reasoning for the change of service.

In response to the question submitted and answer received, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester expressed concern with regard to the answer received to his first question regarding the lack of information at Rotherham Interchange etc. The small number of customers that did not have access

to the internet tended to be ones that were dependent on public transport. When new information came out that it was available in a format that the older demographic or those that did not have access to the internet could use.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester reported that since the last meeting, the No. 116 service had been reinstated. Whilst the great overarching consultation taking place was good, it was felt that discussions at a local level would aid knowledge of commerciality of services.

John Young, Stagecoach, stated that his company would welcome greater input from the community to increase the understanding of local need. It was a very difficult time for transport operators but assured the Group that the withdrawal of a service was a last resort after all options/alternatives had been explored.

Agreed:- (2) That the Chair contact SYMCA due to the frequency of changes and the need for members of the public to be aware of what bus services were available/their schedule and improved communication with communities/Ward Councillors.

Following the deadline for questions, the following questions were submitted by Councillor Bacon which was agreed by the Chairman:-

Question 1. Would you agree that updating twitter rather than the app for cancellations was not good enough?

Question 2. Would you agree that there were no excuses for arriving earlier than scheduled?

Question 3. Live bus signs were ultimately the best way of keeping users up-to-date with live information on timings and cancellations. What has a Ward such as Aston and Todwick with an elderly demographic not on the list to receive them?

John Young, Stagecoach, answered with regard to questions 1 and 2. Twitter was routinely updated but accepted and understood that it was only going to reach a small minority of customers. The app ought to work better and work was ongoing to resolve the problems. Once the office team knew that a journey had to be cancelled, they could go into the system and cancel it which would show up on the app as a "cancelled journey". That should also link to any real time displays but unfortunately that did not always work. It was very frustrating and John would follow-up and try and find a resolution to it.

Question 2 - There was no excuse for buses to run early but it depended upon the detail. A bus timetable for any service would give a list of timing points, probably 10 stops between timing points; a driver would have a list of times they were due at certain stops. It may show on bus stop a time but it was an estimated time. The times were all automated.

As there was no-one present from SYMCA, a formal response would be sought with regard to question 3.

A question had been received from Jean Harte, Dinnington St. John's Parish Council, with regard to the No. 19 service that ran between Worksop and Rotherham and the reported anti-social behaviour being experienced at Dinnington Interchange which was affected service delivery.

John Young, Stagecoach, reported that Service No. 19 was operated by Stagecoach East Midlands from the Worksop Depot. The depot had reported that there had been issues at Dinnington earlier in the year along the lines described by Jean with youths hassling customers who were waiting for buses, throwing missiles at buses and standing the path of buses. It had been quiet through the summer but the weekend of 22nd October First had tweeted that they were pulling services out of the Interchange because of the issues. As a result Stagecoach also pulled their service. It was a concern for Stagecoach and frustrating when trying to provide an essential service but the safety of drivers and passengers was paramount. There had been a number of issues in other areas recently, not within the Rotherham area.

Stagecoach had a policy of if there was an incident they would suspend or divert service from that area for the rest of the evening. If it happened again within a week the service would be suspended for a full week in the evening. The company worked closely with Travel Safe but it was difficult to try and make real progress and it did feel that soon as one problem was resolved another cropped up. Travel Safe had a dedicated Policy Officer. The operators and SYMCA contributed financially to Travel Safe.

Councillor Browne had also requested that the following be fed into the meeting on behalf of the Members' Forum of the Kimberworth Park Community Partnership:-

"One of the issues raised was the recent changes to the local bus timetables.

The recommendation from the meeting had been that the loss of the 138 would be mitigated by rerouting the 139/140 via Ox Close Avenue and Kimberworth Park Road. This would serve the range of community services and facilities along Kimberworth Park Road (shops, surgeries, community meeting places, school), connecting a large part of the estate with its local services and providing for people who are currently struggling with the gradients on roads from the current bus route on Roughwood Road up to Kimberworth Park Road."

Agreed:- (3) That this be forwarded to the SYMCA for consideration.

**24. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY
TRANSPORT - UPDATE**

There was no representation from the SYMCA at the meeting.

25. BUS OPERATORS - UPDATE**Stagecoach****Patronage**

- Approximately 70-71% of pre-Covid level. Daily payers slightly above that with children and young people having come back a lot stronger (just over 100%)
- Concessions was down at approximately 60%
- These trends were broadly replicated across the country
- Weekend travel had come back stronger thought primarily due to the leisure market returning
- Sundays were running at approximately 85% of pre-Covid levels
- It was a really challenging environment for operators due to the significant cost increases of wages/fuel/parts

Staffing

- Of the 5 Stagecoach depots, 4 in South Yorkshire and one in North Derbyshire, there were 40 driver vacant positions. However, the situation was no worse than other operators
- Rawmarsh depot had done an excellent job in the current difficult times, however, there had been a number of leavers and the amount of lost mileage had increased. Measures were in place in an attempt to address the situation and discussions with Trade Unions had taken place. Drivers from other areas had been drafted in to help in the short term
- The training school was busy. Drivers could be recruited but the training took time; as fast as new drivers were trained people were leaving. Exit interviewed were conducted and there was an understanding of the reasons why people left but it was a very difficult time for the industry as a whole

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised and an explanation provided:-

- There had been service changes as from 2nd October. Stagecoach was still in receipt of some funding from the Government (Bus Recovery Grant), however, there had had to be some withdrawal of services. The Nos. 220 and 222 services had withdrawn as they had been extremely marginal services pre-Covid. Post-pandemic, when buses were 30% less people, they were sustainable services. The Grant guidance was very clear that it could not be used to prop up services that had no realistic prospect of becoming viable in the future. Stagecoach had shared their proposals with the SYMCA and

the No. 223 service around Wath was introduced as a partial replacement for the original 222

- When contracts had come up for tender as from 2nd October, taking the staffing position at that time into account, Stagecoach had bid for 3 routes – Nos. 21, 135 and 137 – day time only – as it was felt not to be in a position to cover evenings and Sundays as well. The 135 and 137 were previously provided by First. No. 21 was a combination of 3 routes and serviced by a single decker bus, as per the tender submitted, as Rawmarsh depot did not operate double decker buses.
- As stated above the No. 21 was serviced by a single decker bus. Put in a temporary fix which started last weekend with the timetable amended slightly. A conversation was required with SYMCA as to how it would work. Some journeys were known to be extremely busy so extra resources would be required
- The £2 fare cap in South Yorkshire was to be introduced on 1st November and was funded by the SYMCA until 31st December, 2022. From the 1st January, 2023, the same scheme would be funded by Central Government for 3 months until the end of March, 2023
- Bellows Road development – a discussion took place on this issue at Minute No. 28

Rotherham Community Transport

Adrian Parkinson had submitted his apologies for the meeting.

26. RAILWAY OPERATORS - UPDATE

Lisa Maloney, Northern Railway, gave the following verbal update:-

- Customer numbers had suffered recently compared to pre-Covid due to the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and recent strikes. Previously it had been approximately 80% but over the last month had decreased to 65%
- Autumn was always a difficult period with leaves on line which did affect performance. For the period to date on time was 60%, within 3 minutes arrival 80%, 15 minutes arrival 98% and 3.5% cancellations
- There were still a lot of ongoing issues with the Settle-Carlisle line with the freight derailment and the Cross Pennine Express which had knock on effects to this area
- 3 more strikes were planned for 3rd, 5th and 7th November (it was thought that the 3rd would change as it was the Royal British Legion's London Poppy Day). At present they were RMT strikes with the drivers' union, ASLEF, not having announced any dates as yet. If it

was RMT only then a contingency service could be run as the drivers were not striking

- The December 2022 timetable was launching which included the re-introduction of the services in the Rotherham area which were removed due to training issues etc. in May 2022. The Rotherham-Doncaster service was going back to an hourly service. Northern Railways had been instructed by the DfT to use December 2021 as its base timetable of the services that should be provided

Agreed:- That the update be noted.

27. DONCASTER SHEFFIELD AIRPORT - UPDATE

The Chair reported that, on behalf of the Council, he had attended the last meeting of the stakeholders that was held on a quarterly basis. The last flight out of the airport was next week.

Agreed:- That this item be removed from future agendas.

28. RMBC TRANSPORTATION UNIT - UPDATES

Andrew Moss, Head of Transport Infrastructure, gave the following verbal update:-

- Bus service changes – Following concerns received of local residents, the Service was working with the team at SYMCA to try and identify a solution and some kind of modified service was often offered. On some occasions it was where services had not yet been replaced most likely due to the tendering process
- Transport infrastructure – A number of schemes were almost at completion i.e. Parkway Widening Scheme and the A630 Widening Scheme. The Bellows Road Scheme was now complete as well as Greasbrough Coach Road
- Developing Future Schemes – City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Fund (CRST) . Rotherham would receive £70M+ over 5 years and replaced the Transport Block funding. The Service was looking at assembling the resources to develop business cases for future schemes primarily focussed around public transport improvements, journey reliability and access/congestion of junctions on key routes across the Rotherham area
- The other emphasis within the CRST was the development of business cases for Rotherham mainline station at Parkgate and a new station at Waverley. These would complement the public transport ethos of how the CRST programme was being promoted

- The TCF schemes were progressing with some successes. The Doncaster Road Scheme was a potential less successful scheme due to engineering blockages having been identified causing cost pressures on the proposed scheme and bringing the whole scheme into doubt
- Other schemes progressing on the TCF programme through the various stages of consultation and design for Sheffield Road and consultation was to start on Manvers Way Scheme as well as on Maltby quality bus corridor
- Funding – During the summer Active Travel Fund 4 had been released and, together with colleagues at SYMCAS, the team had begun to identify potential routes to develop bids to that programme. Due to the uncertainty in Central Government, it was not known whether Active Travel 4 would continue or not, however, there would be a short list of schemes for consideration of inclusion in the SYMCA submission to Government.
- 3 schemes were nearing completion related to the Clean Air Zone priorities in South Yorkshire (Rotherham and Sheffield) – Wortley Road (weight restriction), Parkway Widening Scheme (speed limitations) and Bellows Road (bus lane priority junction)

Discussion ensued on the Bellows Road bus lane priority junction. Rawmarsh Ward Councillors had been told at the beginning of the development that the Government had not liked all the buses going up Rawmarsh Hill causing fumes so an alternative would be to use Barbers Avenue and was why junction improvement works had taken place at a cost of 2.5M. Now bus companies were saying that they would still use Rawmarsh Hill.

Andrew Moss stated that it had been a Central Government mandate to consider air quality in urban areas. Clean Air Zones and policies had been developed, in particular within South Yorkshire, to meet certain levels of air quality standard. However, since the development of the scheme, unforeseen events had taken place resulting in altered travel/work patterns and societal behaviour.

Bus operators had to run viable services and had had to respond to the difficulties experienced during and after the pandemic. However, in order to meet the legal requirements of the Government mandate, the Authority would meet with bus operators to try and find a compromise on clean air requirements. As a last resort the Authority had powers within Road Traffic Legislation which could be used to ensure compliance with air quality standards

Agreed:- That a meeting be convened with Rawmarsh Ward Councillors, Transport Infrastructure and relevant bus operators to discuss the issue of Bellows Road further.

29. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

30. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That a further meeting be held on Wednesday, 1st February, 2023, commencing at 10.00 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.