

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY GROUP
Wednesday 6 March 2024

Present:- Councillor Allen (in the Chair); Councillors Bennett-Sylvester, Browne, Castledine-Dack, Griffin, McNeely, Pitchley and Tarmey.

Also in attendance were Paul Hopkinson (First Group), Sam Millington (SYMCA) Nat Porter (RMBC), Matthew Reynolds (RMBC), and John Young (Stagecoach),.

Apologies were received from Councillors, Atkin, Ball, Brookes and Cusworth.

69. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25TH OCTOBER 2023

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 October 2023.

Agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2023, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

70. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES (NOT COVERED BY THE AGENDA ITEMS)

Arising from Minute No. 64 (Bus Operators – Update), where it was agreed that feedback be provided to the next meeting on the reliability of electric buses during periods of adverse weather. John Young, Commercial Director for Stagecoach explained they had electric buses in operation in various parts of the UK of different types. The overall message was that they had performed positively and better than expected overall however it was early days.

71. QUESTIONS ON TRANSPORT ISSUES

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

72. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY TRANSPORT - UPDATE

Sam Millington, Senior Bus Development Officer, who provided the following update:

- He was responsible for leading on the consultation for a number of service changes, which in Rotherham it included service 72 and 217 in the north of the borough, where they had worked alongside Stagecoach to merge the routes together to open up new links and to make 217 more attractive for users. This meant there would be a direct bus from Newell into Cortonwood and a bus from Manvers to Swinton station again.

- There were still two main service change dates per year, in April and September. The Council would be receiving the documents and public notices of the changes and timetables would be going live from Monday 11 March 2024 on www.travelsouthyorkshire.com.
- They were working closely with Stagecoach regarding the introduction of the electric buses in the Dearne Valley on routes 22X and 221.
- A refresh of the Bus Service Improvement Plan had to be submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) by 12 June 2024.
- The next stage of the Bus reform was due to go for before the Leaders of the MCA Board on the 12 March with the publication of the franchising assessment report, which stated that buses in the region should be taken back under public control, with depots and fleets owned directly by SYMCA as the preferred option. If approved at the MCA Board it would then progress to a 12-week public consultation.
- The Tram will go back into public ownership on 22 March 2024. Lots of work had been undertaken in the background to ensure a seamless transition whereby the customer would not notice the difference.
- It was proposed that the tram stop at Magna would open around January time.
- A business plan to help the tram system grow was being developed but it was highlighted that new tram routes were expensive and took time to build.
- In terms of rail, the strikes were continuing, the most recent being with Northern services although information on further dates was not yet available.
- The regulated increase in rail fare of 4.9% was now in place.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:

- With the X78 becoming the X3 service there was a potential that buses could bunch during times such as events taking place at the Sheffield Arena. The existing timetables had been considered when setting the schedule however tweaking the scheduled at a future date was a possibility.
- The Bus reform was significant therefore it was suggested that it be brought back as an agenda item to a future meeting when it was open for public consultation.

Agreed: that an item on the Bus reform would be added for discussion at a future meeting once it was open for public consultation.

73. BUS OPERATORS - UPDATE

First Group:

Paul Hopkinson, Network and Schedules Manager reported that a consultation session had been held at the beginning of February which

ran for two weeks. It was successful and received good feedback and changes had been made to timetables as a result of the consultation. These would be distributed to SYMCA shortly if not already done so.

The journeys had been enhanced on services X1, X78 to give better connections, particularly for the morning services. The suggested revisions would continue as expected.

The extensions to the X5 service in the Dinnington/Maltby area had been received quite well as it was a new service. This provided better connections to Doncaster from the Maltby area and through from Sheffield.

Discussions highlighted the better connections around Dalton/Thrybergh with the X3 service however it was noted that the disruption with the evening services on the 115 and 116 routes were viewed as one-off incidents.

Stagecoach:

John Young, Commercial Director expressed his appreciation for the ability to have these discussions welcome the opportunity to receive feedback from the group.

The Rawmarsh depot was in a good position at the moment this was due to the provision of their first electric bus on site. This had been delivered ahead of the others to provide training opportunities for engineers and drivers. They would receive twenty-three new electric buses going into use on two routes that served Rotherham, which were the 22X and the 221. The launch date for this had been delayed but looking at a date in early May. The buses would look and feel quite different, they would be painted blue and would carry their own brand, Electro. He extended an open invitation to members and others who were part of this group to have a visit to see the vehicles at the Rawmarsh depot.

Services changes would come into effect from 6 April 2024. He confirmed that there would now be two service change dates within a year, these would be the weekend after Easter and the start of September.

He noted that the changes due in April were regarding the punctuality of services with the exception of the 72 and the 217 services which were being joined together. He expressed concerns that these scheduling changes were making the service less attractive but were necessary due to the increased traffic. This was not a new concern but worth reiterating given that some of the timetables had only been altered in October 2023 and changes were being made to them again only six months later.

Additional journeys were being added back in during the evenings and on Sundays for some routes. In October, due to funding issues, SYMCA reduced frequencies on a number of routes. The frequency was maintained on some routes at those times however following feedback a

combination of additional services and improved punctuality should produce a more attractive service for customers. The main frequency increase that was now available due to staff availability was to service 221, from Rotherham, through Swinton to Doncaster was increasing in frequency from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes during the daytime, Monday to Saturday.

The UK Bus Awards took place last month and Dawn Murphy, Operations Manager at the Rawmarsh depot was presented with the award for UK Bus Manager of the Year. Also, one of her control team, Lisa, was highly commended in the Best Newcomer award as well. The Chair requested formally that the groups congratulations be recorded for those two individuals.

Agreed:

1. that anyone wishing to visit the Rawmarsh dept to view the new electric buses should contact Dawn Mitchell, Governance Advisor for this to be arranged with John Young.
2. That formal congratulations to Dawn Murphy and Lisa be recorded in the minutes for their awards at the UK Bus Awards.

Rotherham Community Transport:

No representative was in attendance.

Agreed: That the Head of Transport Infrastructure Service would contact the Rotherham Community Transport service to discuss attendance at or the provision of written updates for future meetings.

74. RAILWAY OPERATORS - UPDATE

No representative was in attendance.

Agreed: That the Head of Transport Infrastructure Service would contact the Railway Operators to discuss attendance at or the provision of written updates for future meetings.

75. RMBC TRANSPORTATION UNIT - UPDATES

The Head of Transport Infrastructure Service, Matthew Reynolds gave the following presentation providing an update from RMBC's Transportation Unit as detailed below:

20mph Zone:

- The Council's 20mph policy was approved by Cabinet in February 2024.
- 20pmh zones would not be implemented on main roads or bus routes, except where there were vulnerable road users such as outside schools.
- They would be implemented with any measures needed to ensure compliance.

- The policy was not a list of where the Council would be implementing 20mph zones.
- The Council would collaborate with local communities and implement these zones where they were supported unless the zone was dictated via the Department for Transport (DfT) for example.
- The Council was still awaiting guidance from the DfT regarding how local authorities could address pavement parking.

Transport Capital Programme 24/25:

- This programme was being considered by Cabinet in March and the programme had already been drafted.
- It consisted of £4.2m to be spent on local schemes of which £1.8 was carried forward from 23/24.
- The acronym CRSTS stood for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement which was the funding the came from the DfT to the SYMCA and then the Council allocated the funding to assist with various objectives.
- The scheme also included some capital from the Council and some Section 106 funding.
- Three pedestrian crossings were progressing within the 2024/2025 funding year, which were Cortonwood, where they were due to be on site during the Summer, Upper Wortley Road, where they were due to be on site during the Spring and Wath Road, which was at the start of the design process.
- In terms of the Local Neighbourhood and Road Safety schemes, tranche 1 was due for delivery during 2024/25 and tranche 2 would begin the development stage in 2024/25 with a view to delivery in 2025/26.

Major projects update:

- The Broom Road cycleways project was substantially complete.
- The Rotherham – Maltby bus corridor forecast would be completed in April 2024.
- The Sheffield Road cycleways was forecast for completion in July 2024.
- The city region sustainable transport settlement outlines a number of key schemes, of which the feasibility study was complete for Fitzwilliam Road, Broom Road extension and the public engagement and consultation was due to commence in the summer.

He noted that the Institute of Chartered Engineers recognised the Council with two awards recently one for Ickles Lock and for the A630 Parkway Widening. These awards will be presented to Council at a future meeting.

Discussion ensued on the presentation with the following issues raised/clarified:

- It was clarified that the CRSTS programme was until 2027 so any

funding could be carried over.

- There was no opportunity to retrofit actions to any previous 20mph schemes.
- Good to see some excellent projects being completed/put forward.
- It was suggested that a crossing on Worksop Road or Dinnington Road in Woodsetts could be considered as part of the Capital Programme in the future.

76. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to report.

77. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed: that a further meeting be held on Wednesday 24 July 2024, commencing at 10am held via Microsoft Teams.