

Questions to Transport Advisory Board – 9 December 2020

1. Where new housing developments are being planned would SYPTE consider a travel incentive such as used to run in which certain areas could get a batch of annual TravelMaster tickets for use on buses, trams and trains in the respective area which for the 'Rotherham' area includes Meadowhall. I am aware of a number of these schemes being run previously but not now. I feel this could make a difference in encouraging people to use public transport rather than the car.

Councillor Cowles

Response

SYPTE continue to ask for s106 funding where this is appropriate but provision of ticketing (Travelmaster) to all developments is a strategic decision for the planning authority which SYPTE will support if required.

Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE

2. Have there been any Covid infection incidents of pupils using school bus services and if so, what system is in place to provide test and trace details of all those using the bus?

Councillor Sheppard

Response

In line with government guidance, all schools have been working closely with local Public Health teams to carefully manage the self-isolation/test and trace requirements for cases where a pupil tests positive for COVID. There have been various times since September when restrictions have been put in place meaning either specific pupils, bubbles or year groups have not used school buses. SYPTE and the school bus operators are providing our full support with any requests or requirements from schools.

Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE

3. As the Tram Train has reduced to an hourly service during lockdown, have passengers travelling to work been able to adequately social distance on board?

Councillor Sheppard

Response

In line with government guidance, all public transport is implementing social distancing and encouraging passengers to follow these rules. It is unfortunate that temporary service reductions have had to be put in place, but local services are not experiencing capacity issues and two trams per hour have since resumed. It has not been possible to reintroduce three trams per hour as there is a risk that several of Supertram's specifically trained drivers would have had to self-isolate at the request of the NHS Test and Trace service resulting in unplanned disruption to the service. Two per hour allows more flexibility to overcome these potential issues.

Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE

4. Is there an update on the delayed departure of Pacer trains from the Northern network?

Councillor Sheppard

Response

During the COVID emergency timetables, Pacers were not required to be in service to deliver the revised plans. They will also not be required to be reintroduced into service for the December timetable or future timetables as Northern services are all now covered by other rolling stock including the full fleet of brand-new trains. All Pacers in our region are therefore officially retired.

Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE

5. What are our bus operators doing to contribute to the current push to rid our roads of diesel/petrol vehicles by 2030?

Councillor Sheppard

Response

SYPTE working with our Sheffield City Region and the local authorities continue to strive for improvements in bus services. The operators have invested millions in recent years in new vehicles with support from successful bids for retrofitting and low emission vehicles secured by SYPTE and SCR. We continue to work collectively through the bus partnerships to deliver improvements for clean air zones and other aspirational improvements in vehicle emissions.

Each operator have their own local, regional and national targets and they have been asked for specific responses.

Powells who provide commercial bus routes in Rotherham and Doncaster as well as contracted services across the county have responded – “Powells is part of HCT Group, which has operations across the country. We have recently introduced a fleet of twenty-one biogas-powered buses in Bristol, along with a dedicated gas fuelling plant in our depot. In London we have recently won our first contract to operate electric buses, for a route starting in spring 2021. While these developments clearly do not directly benefit South Yorkshire at this time, alternative fuels remain in their relative infancy and there remains a steep learning curve both for operators and power providers to make such fuels suitable for fleetwide use. We will continue to explore all opportunities to bring sustainably powered buses to this region and the lessons we are currently learning in Bristol and London will ensure a smooth transition when the time comes”.

Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE