

## **Questions from Members on Transport issues**

1. Have there been any proactive exercises done by staff other than drivers on public transport regarding the wearing of face coverings across the network, other than the signs on transport and in interchanges?

**Councillor Sheppard**

### **Response**

*The safety and wellbeing of public transport customers and staff is our priority and we are following Government guidelines to protect everyone using and working within our interchanges. South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTE) has worked hard with local partners to inform and educate the travelling public of the requirement to wear a face covering whilst on board or in our interchanges. Compliance by customers in following the rules around face coverings is generally very good at well over 90% across the network.*

*Staff at our interchanges are actively encouraging the use of face coverings, and drivers are instructed to politely remind customers that they should wear a face covering onboard. However, neither our interchange staff nor bus drivers have enforcement powers as, under the current Government guidance, these are limited to police officers. Our aim is to achieve high rates of compliance and we need everyone to play their part so those who need to can travel safely.*

*It is the responsibility of individuals to comply with the law and SYPTE and operators are liaising with the local police where necessary to use their powers of enforcement. SYPTE has requested South Yorkshire Police to supply a presence in interchanges to engage with customers not wearing face coverings, when necessary.*

*There are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering and we need to be mindful and respectful of such circumstances, and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others. Guidance states that those who have an age, health or disability reason for not wearing a face covering should not be routinely asked to give any written evidence of this, this includes exemption cards.*

*We encourage people to help control the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), to travel safely and remind them of the need to wear a face covering while using the public transport network, unless they are exempt. We continue to display clear signage and posters and make regular audio announcements, advising customers of the requirement to wear a face covering, maintain social distancing and wash or sanitise their hands regularly.*

*Whilst we appreciate that this is not a perfect arrangement in terms of enforcement, we are fulfilling our obligations based on the current guidelines in place, and compliance by customers is generally very good. Our Customer*

*Service Managers are closely monitoring the situation and liaise with local Police where this is necessary to supply a presence in interchanges and engage with customers not wearing face coverings.*

*We have also used Journey Makers - volunteers who support our customers, although this scheme ended in November last year. As they were volunteers, attendance was sporadic, and they were generally present in our interchanges at Sheffield, Rotherham and Meadowhall for a few hours on a Thursday or Friday afternoon. They also had a presence at Sheffield train station.*

*There were two volunteers for each session, who wore High Visibility jackets and face coverings, and each volunteer:*

- *Welcomed passengers to the station*
- *Supported passenger flow in and out of the interchange/station*
- *Encouraged passengers to use face coverings (in line with government advice)*
- *Provided clear and concise verbal instructions to people using the facility*
- *Reassured passengers and answer questions*

*They received extensive training through Volunteering Matters, the charity who organise the Journey Makers, before they were assigned to us. We asked volunteers to carry out a role to inform/remind members of the public of the requirement to wear a face covering inside the interchange.*

*Please be assured we will continue to work with stakeholders to address and issues.*

***Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE***

*The Northern Trains Ltd response to COVID 19 and what it means for our customers is best accessed through our website and the FAQ's. Face coverings are specifically mentioned here. <https://help.northernrailway.co.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/360009443178>*

***Richard Issac Northern Railway***

2. *What discussions have been held, if any, with government and/or the City Region Mayor in respect of how public transport emerges from the pandemic in a viable form?*

***Councillor Sheppard***

***Response***

*We continue to work with the Department for Transport, Urban Transport Group, Transport for the North and central government on the plans out of*

*Covid for public transport. Some of this will influence local policy, such as the Bus Review, and key documentation, policy and action plans will be driven by nationally policy such as the National Bus Strategy that is due for release in early March.*

**Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE**

*Northern hold bi-weekly meeting for our Local Authority Stakeholders and have done throughout the pandemic. SYPTE attend those meetings. The agenda covers our response to the pandemic and how we emerge from the various lockdowns. Our timetable changes, response to schools returning in Sept 2020 and now March 8<sup>th</sup> have featured largely in these discussions. We also look ahead and discuss how we may respond to the rail markets when customers are encouraged to return to public transport.*

**Richard Issac Northern Railway**

3. In the event of a lack of sufficient government assistance for public transport, how can we protect our least viable services in the region?

**Councillor Sheppard**

**Response**

*Until more is known in terms of what legislation will be available and any funding linked to this, services will continue to be funded as they are now. If patronage does not return to pre-covid levels and financial support for services is reduced, then pressure on the tendered services budget spent by SYPTE will increase. Priority for funding of bus services is already set out in the Tendered Services Criteria Model which will help prioritise the funding, but where funding requirements exceed the available budget, some services may unfortunately be lost.*

*There are too many unknowns at this stage to understand what a post-covid bus network may look like and any financial pressures this may bring.*

**Nathan Broadhead, SYPTE**

4. Given the recent planning approval for an extension of Leeds/Bradford airport, what effect if any could be seen to services currently using Doncaster Airport?

**Councillor Sheppard**

**Response**

*To follow*