

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY GROUP
Wednesday 9 March 2022

Present:- Councillor Allen (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, Browne, Castledine-Dack, T. Collingham, Haleem, Havard, Keenan and McNeely.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Aveyard, Beck, Cooksey, Cusworth, Griffin, Hoddinott, Lelliott, Pitchley, Sheppard and Whomersley, along with Parish Representatives Mrs. D. Fenwick-Green, Mr. C. Jepson and Mrs. J. Hart.

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER, 2021

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Transportation Advisory Group held on 15th December, 2021.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December, 2021 be approved as a true record.

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

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December, 2021.

30. QUESTIONS ON TRANSPORT ISSUES SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

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

In response to the question submitted and answer received, Councillor Atkin further asked why some of the disused bus shelters were still repaired when it would be simpler for them or even the glass to be removed

He was advised by the relevant representative that some of the glass was held in by metal bars and could become a trip hazard so it was important that health and safety was maintained. The glass was, therefore, replaced, or an alternative use of panel or mesh could be put back in its place for shelter that were particular prone to graffiti.

All the funding was committed, but in areas where there were older bus shelters these were prioritised for replacement.

Councillor Atkin confirmed shelters in his area had been reported, but that it was unsightly to see shelters vandalised with graffiti on a main road. He

thought it would save money if the shelters that were no longer used could be removed.

Councillor McNeely had taken note of the written response received as part of the agenda pack, but queried the targeted response where it referred to the "Mayor". She assumed for the purposes of clarity this referred to the Sheffield City Mayor and not the Rotherham Civic Mayor.

An apology was offered and this would be rectified for all future references.

Agreed:- That the information be received and noted.

**31. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY
TRANSPORT, - UPDATE**

Nathan Broadhead of behalf of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) attended the meeting to provide an update on transportation issues across Rotherham and the wider South Yorkshire area.

The service was fairly stable and previous concerns related to school bus services due to the pandemic had been resolved.

General network services had also received funding from the DfT for a £150 million and whilst this would end in April, the funding had been extended for a further six months. This was roll up to the operators for the tendered bus services and light rail for the tram network in Sheffield.

The actual breakdown was not yet available, but work would take place with operators for the use of this funding from April through to September/October 2022. Hopefully this will stabilise the network as transition through after the pandemic.

There were also concerns that the bus network was shrinking and this was inevitable as patronage was running between 60% and 70%. Limited growth was expected beyond that point.. Different areas had faired better than others. Sheffield was struggling, but discussions were going ahead between Leaders and the Mayor so more information would be available in the coming months. This would most likely be after the purdah period so Elected Members could comment.

Agreed:- That the information be received and the content noted.

32. BUS OPERATORS - UPDATE

First Group

Paul Hopkinson provided an update on First Group services including:-

- No major planned changes between now and the start of the funding.
- Staffing - improving picture on the journeys operating from Doncaster with no planned cancellations.
- Looking to reduce the number of planned cancellations in Sheffield from the 4th April when school holidays start and running this to an eventual complete network.
- In terms of schools in Rotherham this was fairly quiet and no operation issues had been raised.
- Currently running 65% and 70% patronage and probably more worrying ENCTS mid to late 50% south Yorkshire figure.

Stagecoach

John Young provided an update on Stagecoach services including:-

- Passenger numbers were around 66% compared to those pre-Covid.
- Concessions were the difficult market to encourage back to using the bus and were around the low 50%'s.
- Staffing had much improved and some changes had been made at the end of October to give customers confidence on the bus network. All mileage in Rotherham was running consistently and it was unusual to lose a journey which the operators were proud of.
- The consistent reliable service for customers' confidence was now established and back in place.
- The additional funding had been confirmed for the next six months. It had been made clear by the DfT this was last round and it could mean making some potential difficult decisions following recovery, whilst recognising the world had changed since the pandemic. Work was taking place with Local Authority colleagues to ensure the best solutions were provided for a sustainable network. This could mean less buses and having to work smarter.
- This will require some transition planning over the next six months in preparation.
- Work was also taking place with colleagues in Rotherham to understand fully and discuss plans to deal with the requirements of the clean air zone in Rawmarsh on Rawmarsh Hill and the implications for bus services, with little change of significance at this stage.

Clarification was sought on the lack of updates by Councillor Bacon to the relevant operators' apps when buses had been cancelled and how information was also not available in Rotherham Interchange. An explanation was provided on how this was updated and the how real time information was fed through. The Interchange should also receive up-to-date displays pushed through by operators.

It was suggested that this be investigated further by the relevant operators to ensure expectations were being realised and for this information to Elected Members accordingly.

The app updates were welcomed by some Members and Councillor Atkin had personal experiences within in his own family. He did ask if, however, with the ever-increasing fuel prices whether operators saw it as an opportunity to encourage more patrons back to public transport.

Operators were mindful of the increase in fuel prices, but acknowledged the challenge for people to replace their own vehicle with public transport on top of all the other cost pressures.

Further information was sought on the design of bus routes by Councillor Bennett-Sylvester, how these were co-ordinated and connectively factored in for patrons who may need a service as hospital visiting time finished, at the end of the school/college day and in the evening especially if buses were running late.

The Group were advised the design of routes was not straightforward in the design of a timetable. Attempts were made to make it easy for patrons to make services run at the same minutes past the hour for example, or integrate with other services on a section of route.

This was more problematic where a service commencing in another area and then needed to be co-ordinated with other services as it crossed over the border like in the Dearne Valley then coming into Parkgate. It was not always possible to get a perfect solution.

It was a judgement call especially when trying to cater for a shift change or hospital visiting times in evenings and in both directions. It was a challenge and any feed back was welcomed.

The Group were also advised that the SYMCA did fund all evenings, early mornings and weekends along the hospital corridor which was proving difficult when budgets were reduced and costs continued to rise.

Every effort was made to co-ordinate the best service available, but this did mean that some services missed connections. However, if the Elected Members had any specific areas they knew were problematic if they could feed this in every effort would be made to tweak services where possible.

One of the challenges was the limited bus priority corridors and heavily congested routes. The Maltby corridor was working successfully, but not so much at Dinnington at the moment.

Any anomalies operators welcomed any suggested feedback.

Rotherham Community Transport

Nathan Broadhead provided an update which included:-

- Usage levels were significantly lower due to the majority of users being elderly. However, there were plenty of booking opportunities available.
- The service continued to be offered for vaccination appointments completely free.
- Community transport was there to be used for access to service and was heavily subsidised with a small fee.

Any Council wishing to have details about community transport should contact Nathan Broadhead direct and he would provide details.

Members welcomed the support and service provided by Community Transport especially for the vaccinations for vulnerable residents and it was requested that this message be forwarded on.

Clarification was sought by Councillor Keenan on whether Community Transport could be used for elderly groups and it was suggested that details be emailed through as the service was available for hire for multi-pickups going to one designated point.

Questions were also raised by Councillor Havard on how easy it would be for people using mobility scooters to get onto the transport and the challenges being faced with their size. It was pointed out that this would need to be agreed with the Community Transport provider and booked in advance so it was clear on passenger requirements and be considered on an individual case by case basis. There was also the option of when visiting Rotherham Town Centre to hire from the mobility centre.

Further information was sought on discounted passes for young people and their usage. It was confirmed that child concession funding was received from all districts who administered the discounted 80p bus fare. This was valid on public transport across South Yorkshire with no restriction at peak times, weekends, and evenings. In addition, operations offered multi-buy tickets for unlimited usage for the week with little to no extra cost. The Travel SY website provided full information.

Agreed:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

33. RAILWAY OPERATORS - UPDATE

Pete Myers, Stakeholder Manager, was invited to give a presentation on Northern Trains.

The presentation would primarily look back at an eventful twelve months, the market place for recovery and customer habits, an update on the transformation at Northern, the Vehicle Strategy and the future, industry Contexts for Williams Shapps and the Integrated Rail Plan.

By way of informative slides detail shared included:-

- Northern Overview.
- Challenges for 2021.
- Customer Recovery and Perception.
- Headline Demand Recovery.
- 2021 Transformational Highlights.
- Fleet Strategy.
- Rail's Carbon and Clean Air Footprint.
- Decarbonisation through the Modernisation of Rolling Stock.
- Northern Rolling Stock Strategy.
- Modernisation of Signalling (ETCS) – Rolling Stock Change.
- Decarbonisation through Model Shift.
- Industry Contexts – The Future.
- Williams Shapps Plan for Rail.
- Great British Railways – Next Steps.
- Ongoing and New Stations.
- Revitalising Your Railway.
- Recovery Activity and Marketing.

The details of the presentation were welcomed and greatly received.

Clarification was sought on whether major stations provided electric charging provision. It was pointed out that whilst this was more of a community asset through Local Authorities and trunking provision was provided for new car parks, it was not something the railway was required to provide or alternatively what kind of charging point could be facilitated.

Agreed:- (1) That Pete Myers be thanked for his very informative presentation.

(2) That the presentation be received and the contents noted.

(3) That the presentation slides be shared with the Transportation Advisory Group Members.

34. DONCASTER SHEFFIELD AIRPORT - UPDATE

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of the Doncaster Sheffield Airport Consultative Committee circulated with the agenda pack.

The Transportation Advisory Group noted the quarterly frequency of this Consultative Committee, but expressed some concern about the number of apologies that had been submitted.

Agreed:- That the minutes be received, concern expressed and the contents noted.

35. RMBC TRANSPORTATION UNIT - UPDATES

Nat Porter, Transport Officer, provided an update. He reported on a number of public transport purchase schemes in the Transforming City Programme including Doncaster Road, Dalton and Maltby. The service were currently preparing consultation on those projects and would be out to public consultation on Doncaster Road in late March and later during April in Maltby.

Prior to this consultation going live Ward Members would be advised accordingly.

In terms of Active Travel Proposals the design of these were ongoing and being finalised as public consultation came to an end for Frederick Street and the proposed changes to the town centre pedestrian zone. Consultation on whether to permit public 24 hour cycling on Frederick Street had now closed and the service were currently in the process of reviewing the responses.

In respect of the Clean Air Zone at Wortley Road much of the signage was now in place, but currently obscured with grey spray paint until all the signage was in place. Whilst there may be some concerns that the signs had been vandalised, this was not the case as there had been some issues with the availability of the variable signage that needed to be in place so it was anticipated that the "go live" date would be mid-April. The prohibition could not be effected until all the correct signage was erected.

In respect of the other Clean Air Zone areas, the junction of Rawmarsh Hill and Bellows Road was ongoing with discussions taking place with the operators and the MCA in respect of requiring changes to bus services.

The service had also reached agreement with Sheffield City Council to deliver the funding for managing the Clean Air Zone problems for the improvements to the bus fleet to reduce their emissions and for buses on that particular corridor to be upgraded.

There were no planned changes to bus service on Rawmarsh Hill in the short term, but a framework had been agreed in terms of how the

required change was achieved and aligned with the transition in bus services. This would be part of the emergency support to buses in September.

Further information would be made available as this progressed to achieve outcomes for effective air quality in a manner that minimised disruption to passengers.

Questions were invited and an update sought on the bus lane at Wickersley and why it had not progressed.

The Transportation Unit confirmed that following consultations with Ward Members the decision was taken for this to not be progressed. The bus lanes at Maltby and Hellaby had progressed along with the changes to extend the bus lane at Wickersley School and improvements to the bus stop at Brecks Crescent.

The importance of bus lanes and bus priority were pointed out as key by operators as this affected costs and level of service that could be offered. A description of the effect of congestion, frequency and slowing the service down making the use of a bus less attractive to customers was provided.

As a further update the Transport Officer reported on commentary about reductions in traffic with the increase of cycling and walking practice since restrictions were lifted. In fact traffic levels had returned to 95% before the pandemic level and around the same as at 2018. Therefore, there was no significant sustained reduction in traffic, but reduced bus priority.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked about the A630 consultation on Doncaster Road which was designed at easing congestion and assumed this included operators. It was confirmed that operators had been engaged with and could respond directly through the consultation or through the discussion at the Bus Partnership Operations Group.

Agreed:- That the Transportation Unit updates be received and noted.

36. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The value of the Transportation Advisory Group in Rotherham was highlighted.

Operators appreciated the opportunity for these types of meetings, welcomed feedback and contributions.

There was no consistent approach across South Yorkshire, but it worked well in Rotherham and attendance by Elected Members was good.

37. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Transportation Advisory Group take place on Thursday, 26th May, 2022 at 10.00 a.m. on a virtual basis via Microsoft Teams.