

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY GROUP
Wednesday 27 November 2024

Present:- Councillor Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Bennett-Sylvester, Beresford, A. Carter, Elliott, Ismail, Harper, Jackson, McKiernan, Rashid, Sutton, Thorp and Williams, Mr. R. Croxton (Treeton Parish Council), Mr. C. Jepson (Anston Parish Council) and Mr. D. Smith (Dinnington St. John's Parish Council).

Also in attendance were Nathan Broadhead (SYMCA), Jessica Clarke (Northern Rail), Brian Edwards (SYMCA), Paul Hopkinson (First Group), Richard Isaac (Northern Rail), Adrian Parkinson (Rotherham Community Transport), Matt Reynolds (RMBC) and John Young (Stagecoach)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Blackham, Brent, Currie, Cusworth, Garnett, Marshall and Yasseen, Maltby Parish Council and Ravenfield Parish Council.

9. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 31ST JULY, 2024

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31st July, 2024.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 31st July, 2024, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

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

Arising from Minute No. 2 (non-attendance), it was noted that the issue of non-attendance had been raised with the Director of Public Transport at the PTE. A response was awaited.

Arising from Minute No. 3 (questions on transport issues), it was noted that the issue with regard to pick-up and drop-off times for disabled adults was being responded to directly with the Councillor concerned.

11. 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 and included with the agenda pack.

Further to question 1, Councillor Thorp asked how a better bus service could be provided for Whiston. It only had one bus an hour, a single decker vehicle, that came from Harthill. Parts of Whiston did not have a service at all.

Nathan Broadhead, advised that, unfortunately for the Whiston/Aston area, First Group had made the commercial decision to remove all

services from that corridor. The MCA was now spending £23M on bus services whereas it used to spend £7M before Covid and was doing what it could with the resources available. A tender had been put out which was won by Stagecoach and tried to cover everyone with the limited resources available. Stagecoach unfortunately because of how services had to interwork meant that it operated a single decker from Rawmarsh. It was an area underserved.

The best solution was looking at Bus Reform. Bus Reform did not have the answer to everything but if a decision was taken to remove franchising then that would put it more in the local authority decision but did not automatically mean that it would remedy the situation. If the franchising decision was not to go that way, the MCA would continue to work with operators.

Councillor Sutton asked if consideration could be given to a direct bus route from Maltby to the hospital due to the number of staff who lived in the area and residents who had to attend hospital appointments.

Nathan advised that it was the commercial bus operator's decision to remove the service due to the small patronage numbers. The MCA could not fund that service when there were 10 people a day. In terms of staff, meetings had taken place with the hospital on a number of occasions. Staff came from a number of directions and there was nowhere natural for a park and ride service. Also the finishing times of staff meant that it was very difficult to provide a bus service for the varying times. Currently the MCA could not afford to provide another standalone service from Maltby and it was not financially viable for First Group.

Paul Hopkinson, First Group, confirmed that the numbers were as low as 10 passengers a day that the service had been carrying.

Councillor Adair asked if the bus service was running smoothly at the current time.

Nathan Broadhead reported that there had been some challenges and some major investment by Rotherham in terms of works around Sheffield Road, Broom Valley and Wickersley as well as bridge repair works around the ring road. They had all had some impact on bus services. Christmas was now approaching with the associated traffic around Meadowhall and Parkgate which caused challenges.

TM Travel had had a number of problems i.e. struggling with parts for vehicles and retaining drivers. The situation was improving but not at the level where it should be.

Work would continue with the operators and local authorities.

Nathan Broadhead, Bus Partnership and Development Manager, reported on some personnel changes at SYMCA with Brian Edwards now being the new Assistant Director and specifically for buses within SYMCA. Nathan and/or Brian would continue to attend the TAG meetings with others attending for specific agenda items.

Christmas Period

There would be the usual changes to service levels over the Christmas period with operators running Saturday services with extra early morning buses for shift workers where required. The information would be communicated through the South Yorkshire website to enable passengers to be able to plan their journeys.

Service Changes

Other than minor changes there were 2 service changes a year with the next being the Sunday after Easter Sunday.

Bus Reform

The Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) Authority and Board was taking forward potentially the next steps of franchising. Work has been done on the costings and business plans and was now out to 12 weeks public consultation and would end in January 2025. There were a number of drop-ins taking place in Rotherham (see below) that members of the public could attend.

Sheffield Interchange	6 th December, 2024 10.00 a.m.-2.00 p.m.
Meadowhall Interchange	9 th December, 2024 3.00 p.m.-6.00 p.m.
Rotherham Interchange	12 th December, 2024 12.00 Noon-2.00 p.m.
Wickersley Library	17 th December, 2024 4.00 p.m.-6.00 p.m.

Nathan advised attendance at the drop-ins or email with any specific questions.

Councillor Williams queried the consultation events taking place. The nearest event for the Hooper Ward had been at Wath Montgomery Hall which had been advertised at short notice. Parts of the Ward were very rural with residents dependent on the existing bus service.

Nathan advised that there was a separate Bus Reform Team who were arranging additional events as and when resources allowed. The event at Wath had been well attended but probably more from the Wath/Dearne Valley area.

Matt Reynolds advised that the initial feedback from the Bus Reform was that 3,500 responses had been received across South Yorkshire. It was essential that the Rotherham voice was heard in the conversation. Members were urged to share the consultation information that was available.

MCA

Parkgate – the new link road and extended park and ride for tram train was due to open December/early January. There had been some delays mainly due to utilities but work was ongoing to resolve.

Tram train – Magna park and ride was progressing. There would be suspension of services to accommodate some of the work with a bus replacement service provided.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if there was any potential for linking bus routes through Aldwarke Lane into the park and ride.

Nathan advised that the link road would open and provide that link, however, there was the issue of the bridge that caused issues for the larger buses. There were a number of planning applications for that area and work would take place with the Planning Department with regard to any potential Section 106 funding. To provide a park and ride link into that end there would still be quite a walk and would be talking about a bus running straight through. Only one end would be adopted by Rotherham and the remainder owned by a private landowner who was not in favour of a bus running through the site.

13. BUS OPERATORS - UPDATE**First Group**

Paul Hopkinson, Network and Schedules Manager, reported that it was a period of stability for the Group's services with no planned changes for the foreseeable future.

There were no issues with staff or engineering problems.

Stagecoach

John Young, Commercial Director, reported that service delivery was really strong particularly in the Rotherham area thanks to the performance of the Rawmarsh Depot. Of Stagecoach's 5 depots, Rawmarsh was the top performer.

Lost mileage i.e. journeys that did not run for any reason was 0.4%, some weeks even less so in general in excess of 99%.

Punctuality was also very good but was now in the most challenging time of the year. A spare bus had been added into the Rawmarsh depot until early January to provide the ability to react to conditions more effectively and more quickly. It did add a cost into the business but the company felt it was important to do to and try and keep the service running.

In period 4 (August) punctuality hit 90%. The target was 95% of all journeys to run on time (up to 5 minutes late); managed to achieve 90%. In the following 3 periods (12 weeks), punctuality was around 88% and for period 8 (which in now) the situation was 85%.

The 23 new electric buses were now well established and on the road (routes 22X and 221). They had been extremely well received by customers and staff/drivers/engineers. Their performance was excellent.

There were no planned significant changes until Easter which would also coincide with some tender renewals.

The 22X and 221 had had enhanced frequency. The 221 service had been improved from every 60 minutes to every 20 minutes during day times and improved evening time and Sunday provision from 60 minutes to 30 minutes. This was working well. The 22X day times service was already every 15 minutes but had doubled the frequency in the evening and Sundays. Early indications were that this was not working as well so would be given time to be established and then reviewed.

A few adjustments had been made on the announcement system on the buses as result of feedback.

It was early days with regard to the costs of running electric vehicles. Early indications were positive.

A specially liveried Christmas bus was doing its rounds at the moment spending a week at each of the depots. It had just moved to Rawmarsh and was on the road currently. It would be operating a selection of routes for the next week or so.

Rotherham Community Transport

Adrian Parkinson reported that 2 electric vehicles had recently been introduced to the fleet which had been well received by passengers and staff. The Service continued with the shop-a-buses to local supermarkets.

Currently looking at activities and day trips out for next year.

14. RAILWAY OPERATORS - UPDATE

Richard Isaac, Northern Rail, gave the following update:-

Performance – from 13th October-9th December

- short formation 2% resulting in short formation of 90 services
- 9.5% cancellations
- Performance on time – 49.4%
- Time to 3 – 70.9%
- Time to 15 – 96%
- Performance was not where wanted to be and significant improvements had hoped to see

Industrial Relations

Northern was an amalgamation resulting in 6 different Terms and Conditions for employees which presented significant challenges.

Although there had been the very welcome recent pay award from Government, weekend working had not been addressed. Currently working on the weekend in the rail industry was voluntary and not in the majority of Terms and Conditions. There was a move to improve that and there was a vote at the Conductor Employee Council today to put a temporary fix in until March 2025 to encourage weekend and Sunday working; it was hoped to get the result of the vote on 28th November. It would be a significant impact for colleagues to change their Terms and Conditions to work a weekend when they had never had to do so before. The Trade Unions had endorsed it but it was not known whether their members would agree. That would significantly improve the service offer at the weekend which was the major source of poor performance. As an operator working volunteers at a weekend was challenging to deliver the rail service to the community.

Further discussion would take place in March around modernisation.

Community Activity

There had been significant work with Rotherham College who had produced a fantastic display on Rotherham Station. Northern Rail was launching it again under the umbrella of "Rail 200" which celebrated the 200th anniversary of the first rail passenger service in the world (which was in Great Britain).

Rotherham College were working with Northern Rail to promote tourist opportunities on the East coast. 50+ students were producing a series of poster displays to promote the East coast as a tourist destination. There was a reciprocal arrangement with East Riding College who were promoting Rotherham and South Yorkshire to the residents of the East Riding area.

Employment Opportunities

Northern Rail was still promoting its vacancies as a result of the railway investment. There were a significant amount of employment opportunities within the rail industry over the next 10-15 years and sharing that directly with Rotherham College to reach the young people in Rotherham to highlight the opportunities within the rail sector.

Rotherham College was involved in a joint rail project with the UK Youth Parliament Engagement Team for the recent Parliament Week. It was hoped that some of the students on the Rail 200 project would present to Sarah Champion MP in Parliament with some other students on some of the partnership work that been doing with them.

Northern Rail had also linked up this year with the Sheffield City of Sanctuary and colleagues from Rotherham. Trips had taken place for some of those affected by the riots in Rotherham and 7 members of the community that were in the hotels during the riots taken to Leeds to attend a joint event with other refugee groups in Leeds.

Richard also introduced Jessica Clarke who would be helping to support South Yorkshire communities.

15. **RMBC TRANSPORTATION UNIT - UPDATES**

Matt Reynolds, Head of Transportation Infrastructure, gave the following powerpoint presentation on the Transport Infrastructure Service:-

Recently Completed Projects

- Centenary Way Bridge Repairs
- Traffic Management Act Part 6
- Motorway Service Area M1 J33
- Swallownest and Cortonwood Crossings
- Packman Road Retaining Wall
- Traffic Signal Obsolece Grant
- M1 Smart Motorway Retrofit Programme

Current Projects

- DfT Funded A6022 Scheme to reduce road traffic Collisions in Swinton
Delay – not delivering and overscoped
£0.75M
Considerations – utilities, resources, resurfacing
- Fitzwilliam Road
St. Ann's Roundabout, cycle and bus lands on Fitzwilliam Road and neighbourhood improvements
Circa £16M allocation
Completion March 2027
Considerations – utilities, consultation and strategic acceptance, drainage and construction
- Broom Road
Extension of Broom Cycle Lane, Stag Roundabout and Wickersley Road
Circa £10M allocation
Completion January 2025
Considerations – trees and verges, strategic acceptance and construction

Other Projects

- Magna Tram Train
- Parkgate Link Road
- Rotherham Mainline Station
- Waverley Station
- LNRS1 and LNRS2

Autumn Budget - Headlines

- Programme Review
- 10 Year Investment Plan
- Bus Fare Cap at £3

- Investment in Buses
- Walking and Cycling
- National Rail – GBR
- Electric Vehicle Investment
- Fuel Duty Freeze

John Young, Stagecoach, requested that they be included in the consultation on St. Ann's roundabout as it was an accident blackspot from their perspective.

It was also noted that the £3 fare cap was not a flat fare as some incorrectly thought. Some fares would not be £3 with some being cheaper and also consideration should be given to the day/week ticket price options as they would become more important as they were pre-fare cap.

Stagecoach was also looking at simplification of fares as it had done at the start of 2020 and keen to see what could be done again as the next step in delivering that.

Councillor McKiernan thanked officers for the work on Centenary Way being completed ahead of schedule.

There was so much need for better connections at Waverley particularly with the advanced manufacturing element. Investors were asking about the green credentials etc. which all gave weight to a strong case for a train station. Work was continuing on the business case and making it known to SYMCA.