

RMBC TRANSPORT LIAISON GROUP
Monday, 22nd November, 2010

Present:- Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors Austen, Barron, Buckley, Ellis, Falvey, Goulty, Hodgkiss, R. S. Russell, Pickering, Sims, Swift and Whysall.

together with:-

Rupert Cox	Stagecoach Yorkshire
Stephen Hewitson	Rotherham Community Transport
Pam Horner	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive
Richard Simons	First South Yorkshire
David Stevenson	Stagecoach East Midlands
Tom Finnegan-Smith	RMBC Transportation Unit Manager

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting. It was explained that a full seminar had been arranged for 23rd November, 2010 in respect of the PTE budget.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Atkin	RMBC Ward 19 (Wath)
Councillor Dodson	RMBC Ward 12 (Rotherham East)
Councillor P. A. Russell	RMBC Ward 14 (Silverwood)
Councillor Sharman	RMBC Ward 21 (Wingfield)
Councillor Whelbourn	RMBC Ward 10 (Rawmarsh)
Shayne Howarth	Stagecoach Yorkshire
Paul Sylvester	Stagecoach Yorkshire

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH JUNE, 2010

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the RMBC Transport Liaison Panel held on 28th June, 2010.

Resolved:- That the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

4. ANY MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

5. UPDATES FROM THE TRANSPORT OPERATORS

The following reports were submitted:-

(i) First South Yorkshire

Richard Simons reported very few changes had been made at the last service change date. Also there were very few planned for the next service change at the end of January, 2011 other than minor adjustments in the interests of punctuality and reliability.

He added that November was Passenger Safety Month and small cards were being given out with a message advising passengers to remain seated until the bus had stopped, with contact details on the reverse. A supply of these cards would be left on the reception at the Town Hall.

(ii) Northern Rail

No report was given.

(iii) Rotherham Community Transport

Stephen Hewitson, gave a presentation based on the 21st Annual Meeting highlighting:-

- 20% increase to 130,000 passenger journeys
- January & February 2010 proved a particular challenge with disruption to services as a consequence of the most severe winter weather experienced since we set up Rotherham CT in October 1989
- Services have been re-shaped to reflect the Personalisation of Social Care and our involvement with Rotherham Council delivering services for older people and home to school transport for children with disabilities has grown
- We have been able to extend our services for Children & Young People by working in partnership with other Voluntary & Community Organisations to provide after school activities and short breaks for children with special needs and their families
- Looking ahead a new partnership with the Mayor's Charity means we can offer support to a wider range of small community groups and organisations with the availability of a new 17 seat minibus. To accommodate the growth in activity and fleet size to 30 vehicles with the delivery of a new "Door 2 Door" Community Transport vehicle due in December 2010 we are in the final stages of acquiring larger premises thanks to the support of the Charity Bank and Yorkshire Key Fund.

5 Key Services:-

- (i) Door 2 Door Community Transport for Older People or Disabled

People who have difficulties using standard public transport supported with funding from South Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority:

This had seen a slight drop in user numbers with a fall in bookings mostly from the rural areas of Rotherham.

- (ii) Social Care Transport for Older People supported by Rotherham Council Neighbourhood & Adults Services:- this had shown a major increase in activity.
- (iii) Home to School Transport for Children with Special Needs contracted by Rotherham Council's Children & Young Peoples Services: this area had also shown an increase in activity.
- (iv) Personalised Care Services & other "Dial & Ride" Community Transport:- service included supporting people with learning disabilities and health related journeys.
- (v) Transport for Community Groups & Organisations:- there had been an increase in use particularly by community groups and junior and infant schools.

Older People and Community Transport:- Older people were frequent users of Community Transport and accounted for around 70% of registered Dial-a-Ride users and up to 90% of passengers using Shoppa & Care-Link Services.

Top 10 destinations:- Rotherham Town Centre; Rotherham College; Rother Valley College and Morrisons at Bramley and Parkgate being the most popular.

Fleet Performance Indicators:- included rides per hour; miles per ride; fleet utilisation (average hours per day)

Annual Passenger Survey results and respondents' profile:-

- SYPTE annual survey of Community Transport Passengers in 2009 -560 people responded to the survey
- the majority of those who completed the survey were women aged 75+
- the results continue to showed a high level of satisfaction with the service
- main reasons for using the Door 2 Door service included shopping; and keeping in touch with friends and family; accessing college, care and health services
- length of journey; safety; time spent on vehicle, cost
- satisfaction with availability of service; destinations; information about services; reliability; ease of making a booking; getting on and off; cleanliness of vehicle; helpfulness of driver; length of time at destination

Looking Ahead – the next 21 Years?

- Funding for Door 2 Door Community Transport, Social Care & Home to School Transport is secured to March 2013
- The Personalisation of Social Care introduces a new set of challenges' and opportunities for Community Transport and our experience of supporting Short Breaks and Activities under the new Aiming High for Disabled Children arrangements widens our involvement in meeting the transport needs of Children & Young People in Rotherham. We expect passenger journeys to increase by a further 20% (to around 160,000 journeys) to March 2011
- To support this growth we are planning a move to larger premises in early 2011 which will provide additional parking and workshop space.
- Booking & Scheduling is critical to the reliable delivery of flexible, personalised door to door community transport and a new system; CATSS (Computer Aided Transport Scheduling System) developed by Thames Valley Community Transport Operators has been introduced during the summer of 2010
- We are working with South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive Officers to review the Rotherham Community Transport and South Yorkshire Shopper Bus and explore ways of enhancing the capacity of this service in the Rotherham area.
- Our "Community Links" worker continues to support small groups in finding ways to meet their transport needs through applications for small grants and use of Community Transport.
- We intend looking at the contribution made by our volunteer car drivers, particularly in relation to helping community transport passengers get to and from hospital or make other journeys related to their health & social care

In summary Rotherham Community Transport was:- "Doing more than you imagine – changing the world and widening horizons".

Members present commented on:-

- the range of services provided
- the need to assess the impact of cuts over the next few years
- were there enough volunteer car drivers for the services offered?

In reply reference as made to:-

- the limited number of drivers involved in the lift giving scheme
- the introduction of the Mayor's minibus scheme was helping to attract new volunteers from groups using the vehicle
- Recruitment for Door 2 Door drivers tended to attract only a limited response from older male drivers with an appropriate D1 licence qualification
- Concerns that cuts of up to 27% affecting Social Care and Children & Young Peoples Services would impact on Community Transport

- it had been advised that SITA's capital programme for vehicle replacement had been cut and that there could be a further potential reduction in revenue funding for supported services of 7-10% but no details were available at the moment
- a 20% reduction in BSOG would impact on operators from 2012

The Chair thanked Stephen for his interesting and informative presentation.

(iv) South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive

Pam Horner reported on the following:-

(a) Bus services:-

There had been no major changes to contracted bus services. However there would be an impact of funding cuts on the operators and their service provision.

Reference was made to the ending of the fuel duty rebate in 2012 which would affect operators.

Elected Members made reference to the punctuality and reliability of certain services.

Elected Members were invited to continue to report any service issues directly to Pam.

(b) Rotherham Central rail station:-

It was reported that progress on the redevelopment had been delayed until summer 2011 due to the Contractor experiencing problems obtaining trackside approvals and permissions. Obtaining permissions from Network Rail can be a slow process. In addition the contractor had discovered an unstable retaining wall that may require additional permissions to be requested from Network Rail.

With the onset of winter work was in progress to provide temporary shelter on both platforms and a Portacabin waiting area. Complaints have also been received about the temporary footbridge being slippery when wet and the dark environment when crossing the bridge despite the lighting provided being at full lux. Measures were in place to ensure leaves were cleared. The height of the sides of the footbridge had also been raised as a security issue by females as it meant they could not be seen when crossing the footbridge.

(c) Bus Shelters:-

It was reported that when SYPTE became aware of shelter damage the glazing was replaced as part of the overall contract, at very low cost.

However, damage is always recorded against each individual site and where this exceeded the threshold glass was generally replaced with more rugged material such as polycarbonate or other rugged products. However, polycarbonate did not provide the vision of glass should this become etched and require grinding off. The shelter replacement programme for the whole of the current financial year was taken up and committed for next year. However, Elected Members were asked to continue to make requests for consideration.

Members present raised and discussed the following:-

- the need for additional lights on the footbridge
- consideration of other engineering solutions i.e. wire grid on the upper part of the footbridge to facilitate visibility of users
- the need to keep on top of the leaf clearance
- the length of the delay and knock on effect on the cost

Pam Horner agreed to feedback Members' comments to the Project Manager and to provide the requested information in respect of the delay and cost implications.

(iv) Stagecoach East Midlands

David Stevenson reported there were no planned changes. Currently there were no problems in Dinnington. However reference was made to the dark nights.

(v) Stagecoach Yorkshire

Rupert Cox reported that there had been no timetable changes and none were planned for the end of January 2011.

However some changes had been made to the fleet. Across the district 100% of buses were now low floor. Also 7 new vehicles would come into service in January 2011 to upgrade Service 221. This made a total of 40 new buses invested in the Rotherham district over the last 3 years.

The Chairman thanked all the operators for their updates.

6. UPDATES FROM RMBC TRANSPORTATION UNIT

Tom Finnegan-Smith, RMBC Transportation Unit Manager, reported on highways and transportation projects and the budget situation for the next financial year onwards, and the impact of the announcements in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 1st October, 2010.

It was explained that the majority of the budget came from the DfT and that this had been revised through the CSR process. This had implications of the various budgets the Council received from the DfT.

Major Schemes:- decisions on all major schemes (A57 Todwick Crossroads improvement; Waverley Link Road: Bus Rapid Transit Scheme N and S) were deferred in early summer until after the CSR.

The DfT had now set out major schemes into various funding pools and in general the DfT will prompt scheme promoters to reduce costs and seek greater third party contributions from development in order to see clearer economic benefits.:-

Level 1 – Supported pool:- to receive DfT funding subject to “best and final offer” from the local authority. For Rotherham this meant that the A57 scheme had support and officers were preparing “A best and final offer” for funding for consideration by the Council before sending to the DfT before Christmas.

Officers had already met with the DfT to consider alternatives as a result of a current funding gap in the required local contribution.

Level 2 – Development pool:- Waverley link Road, White Rose Way and Supertram additional vehicles had been included, totalling £1.2bn. These schemes would be competing nationally for the funding. Further work would be done to submit a best and final offer next Autumn.

Level 3 – Pre-qualification pool:- this was a group of national schemes to be assessed against criteria by the DfT in January, 2011 and included the Bus Rapid Transit Scheme Northern route, A61 Penistone Road Smart Route. Competing to be included within the Development pool, which will then have a budget of £600m for all schemes within it. Clearly this will mean that many of the schemes in the Development Pool will not receive funding.

It was pointed out that the BRT Southern route was not included and the PTE along with Sheffield City Council were to lobby the DfT, and also to look at alternative sources of funding e.g. the Regional Growth Fund, and for the inclusion of Waverley as a key development area.

Integrated Transport Funding (Local Transport Plan):- for local safety schemes, pedestrian crossings, traffic management, residents’ parking schemes etc. The number of requests for projects from the local community was noted.

This funding was cut by 25% at the beginning of the year when the new Government was formed. It would be cut further by 33% (effectively a 50% cut) at the start of the next financial year. Therefore there would be a significant effect on the programme of works. The Settlement announcement expected shortly would clarify the situation.

It was also noted that the DfT had a new formula to determine the level of funding local authorities received.

New funding sources included:-

- (i) Regional Growth Fund
- (ii) Local Sustainable Transport Fund - £6m over the next 3 years

It was pointed out that it was a national competitive bidding process and officers were looking at ways to bid.

The Chairman thanked Tom for his update.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other items of business.

8. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the RMBC Transport Liaison Group be held on WEDNESDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2011 at 2.00 p.m. – Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.