

Questions to Transport Advisory Group – 31st July, 2024

Question 1 – Councillor Blackham

I am receiving various communications regarding poor quality of service from the Door-to-Door service particularly with regard to transport offered to Disabled clients. The main issues seem to be the unreliability of pick up and drop off times. These can vary by up to one and a half hours both in a morning and evening. For Clients that are attending events this has knock on consequences to their entire day's activity and on the services of other partner organisations. For example, Socialeyes whose daily activities are being compromised by the unscheduled late arrival of their clients and indeed the unreliability of the pickups at the end of the day. In addition, when Clients need additional services because their care package has been increased and they need to attend for additional days Door to Door are refusing to extend their service to the individuals concerned, stating that they do not have the capacity to service these clients.

I should point out that my son Mr Matthew Blackham is one of those affected by the issues raised above.

I would like an assurance that this situation is only temporary and that Door to Door will commit to a date by which their service will be of a suitable quality to meet the reasonable expectations of the Disabled community within Rotherham. They deserve no less.

Answer SYMCA - Community Transport provides vital services for the whole of Rotherham. Reductions and pressures on other organisations including community groups, doctors and the NHS more widely, has meant that more and more users are wanting to use community transport for medical appointments and other needs.

South Yorkshire MCA fund community transport so that all communities can get travel at least twice per week so that everyone in the community can use the services. The challenges seen by the NHS and educational/day care centres, including for transport of patients, has seen a sharp rise in requests for transport for doctors, daycare/education and hospital appointments. These journeys are proving to be a challenge for community transport as they regularly run late and this has a knock-on effect to other customers.

Customers using community transport are given an initial time and this is confirmed more accurately nearer the booking date. On occasions these times have to be changed to cater for the needs of everyone. Community Transport requires customers to have some flexibility as it is not a taxi service but a service trying to cater for the whole community. Some customers would like to access transport 5 days a week but this is not something that can be achieved as the number of vehicles and drivers are not available.

Feedback from customers shows a high level of satisfaction and regular use by residents week after week. Unfortunately issues do arise, usually outside of the control of the community transport provider, but we continue to work with them on improving services. To tackle the ageing fleet of vehicles the community transport providers have, SYMCA is investing £1.2m in new vehicles and infrastructure during 2024/25 that will see new electric vehicles trialled, including in Rotherham.

If community groups wish to book multiple pick-ups for regular events then this is something we can discuss with them but a balance has to be found so that all users can access the service and it is not monopolised by the same groups or individuals to the detriment of others.

With regard to the Councillor's questions that relates to a specific individual, we cannot respond to the details on this, but both SYMCA and Rotherham Community Transport are happy to meet with the Councillor to discuss his personal transport needs and concerns.

Question 2 – Councillor Thorp

The bus lane from Maltby, when it passes Wickersley School, there are parents dropping off or picking up school children holding the buses up - why are there speed cameras but no bus lane infringement cameras.

Answer – RMBC - Whilst the Council does hold powers to enforce bus lanes, no concerns have been raised with us by operators regarding delays caused by misuse of bus lanes at this location. We would invite operators' views on the matter – enforcement was something the Council could consider if there was need.

Question 3 – Councillor Thorp

The latest cycle lane on Westgate to be opened - what is this meant to be? It has to be incorrect and this needs changing.

Answer RMBC - To support affordable and environmentally friendly travel, 400 metres of advisory cycle lanes on Westgate help extend the existing cycle route from the Sheffield City boundary near the Magna Science Adventure Centre on the A6178, through to Rotherham Town Centre. They indicate to drivers the distance they should leave when passing cyclists. Motorists use a single lane down the middle of the road, moving into the advisory cycle lanes when passing vehicles approaching in the opposite direction. The layout was developed to provide cycling infrastructure proportionate to volume of traffic with reference to national guidelines, whilst prioritising space for walking and maintaining access to businesses, which were highlighted to us during scheme development as priorities for Ward Members and the local community.

Whilst new to Rotherham, the layout has formed part of Department for Transport design guidance since at least 2008, and successful similar schemes have been in place in the UK for as long as two decades. Observations undertaken to date indicate the layout was working well (notwithstanding an increase in traffic associated with displacement from the ongoing Centenary Way viaduct works). The scheme will be monitored post implementation, including being subject to a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit. The latter audit has been commissioned and we expect to receive the audit report within weeks.

Question 4 – Councillor Thorp

Concerns have been raised about crossings on the Stag roundabout having no pedestrian control so always at the mercy of drivers following the highway code.

Answer RMBC - Officers sympathise with this concern – per our current procedure for assessing pedestrian crossings, the extant zebra crossings are no longer an adequate provision for pedestrians for the road layout and volume of traffic passing through the junction.

The Council was developing a scheme to improve, amongst other things, pedestrian crossings at Stag Roundabout, with initial feasibility work indicating replacement of the zebra crossings with signal-controlled crossings as being the emerging preferred option. Funding for the works would be part of a broader scheme, funded by the Department for Transport and so needing to deliver on the Department's strategic objectives in respect of bus priority and active travel to leverage this funding. We hope to commence engagement on this scheme with the public later this year.