

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY GROUP
Wednesday 11 February 2026

Present:- Councillor Williams (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Ahmed, Allen, Baggaley, Bennett-Sylvester, Bower, Brent, Clarke, Currie, Fisher, Harper, Rashid and Thorp and Parish Councillor Bob Croxton (Treeton Parish Council).

Also in attendance were Brian Edwards (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority); Richard Isaac (Northern Rail), Michael Moore (First Bus), John Young (Stagecoach) and Nat Porter (RMBC).

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor Ismail); Councillors Ball, Z. Collingham, Cusworth, Garnett, Ismail, Jackson, Lelliott and Marshall, Clive Jepson (Anston Parish Council) and Adrian Parkinson (Rotherham Community Transport).

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER, 2025

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th November, 2025.

Agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th November, 2025, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

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

There were no matters arising.

51. QUESTIONS ON TRANSPORT ISSUES

Question 1 – From Councillor Thorp

Why can a bus not be diverted off Bawtry Rd when heading to Rotherham, turn left down Worrygoose Lane, turn right down Cow Rakes Lane then along High Street, turn right onto Pleasley Road, back up to Moorgate crossroads and back onto its route and the opposite on its return. This has been a bus route before so still has its bus stops in position. This route headed through the heart of Whiston which has a population of approximately 5,000 people but buses only skirted the outer roads of Whiston. Since its withdrawal, the people who lived in the centre of Whiston who needed or wanted to use public transport, must walk to the extremities of Whiston to catch one or, most likely since it was hilly, take a car.

Brian Edwards, SYMCA, stated that the request highlighted an important point about connectivity for residents living within the village and SYMCA acknowledged the wider concerns about access to public transport for communities situated away from established main road routes.

At present, there were no immediate operational plans to revise existing services to run through Whiston. Service 21 continued to operate through the main village, although this did not run via Cow Rakes Lane as the route was no longer a circular so needed to run in both directions, or potentially be split with a 2 hourly service via Cow Rakes Lane and a 2 hourly service via Greystones Road.

Where feasible within current operational and financial constraints, SYMCA would continue to explore options that could improve transport provision for Whiston residents. It was also important to highlight the forthcoming shift to a franchised bus system in South Yorkshire from September 2027. Under franchising, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority would have greater ability to design routes based on social value and community need, rather than the commercial priorities that currently shaped the network. This transition presented a significant opportunity to review localised connectivity issues, such as those affecting Whiston, in a more integrated and strategic manner.

Councillor Thorp clarified that he was asking for one of the buses to come off Bawtry Road to access Whiston but rejoin at Whiston crossroads, onwards to the hospital.

Brian stated that he would take the request back to the team and arrange a meeting with Councillor Thorp to discuss it further.

Agreed:- (1) That SYMCA and Councillor Thorp meet to discuss the possibility of a bus re-route around Whiston.

Question 2 – From Councillor Thorp

The bus service into the estate off Herringthorpe Valley Road, service No. 114, ran for 12.5 hours with a total of 13 services per day. However, the problem was that this was a very steep route out of the estate; would it be possible to run buses after 18.00 from Rotherham so people did not have to use their own transport and no Sunday service at all.

Brian Edwards reported that SYMCA recognised the importance of improving public transport accessibility when services concluded early in the evening. While the existing timetable reflected what operators had been able to provide on a contracted basis, it was appreciated that the steep gradient leaving the estate and the reliance on personal transport after early evening created barriers for many residents.

SYMCA was pleased to confirm that it was currently exploring options to introduce both Monday to Saturday evening journeys and a full Sunday service. There was no timescale as yet as it was subject to budgetary pressures within SYMCA.

The exploratory work aimed to determine whether enhanced evening and Sunday provision could be supported. In the longer term, the introduction

of bus franchising in South Yorkshire from September 2027 would provide greater flexibility to design services based on social value and community need. As part of franchising preparation, SYMCA would undertake a comprehensive review of local connectivity requirements and the needs of residents in Herringthorpe would form a key part of that assessment.

The outcome of the discussion would be fed into the meeting to be arranged with regard to question 1.

Question 3 – From Councillor Bennett-Sylvester

From personal experience, when travelling from Thrybergh with my wife to Rotherham hospital and the town centre and since the new road opened at Parkgate, 90% of the time it was more convenient and less expensive to get an Uber than travel by bus.

Whilst there has been an emphasis on the cost of longer journeys with the £3 cap, had any work been done at looking at lowering the price of short journeys or using tools like dynamic pricing to offer lower priced short local off-peak bus travel?

Brian Edwards, SYMCA, confirmed that fare structures were being reviewed as part of the bus franchising work including the option for short journey pricing. For dynamic pricing there needed to be a balance as there was a benefit in users having certainty of fares, but again it was an option that was being considered as well as group travel fares.

Currently general fares were set by the operators, however, the Fares Team was working within the Franchising Team and various options were being considered including group travel opportunities and dynamic pricing.

Agreed:- (2) That a representative of the SYMCA Franchising Team attend the next meeting to provide an update on the current situation.

Question 4 – Bob Croxton, Treeton Parish Council

I raised a question a few meetings back about the Waverley estate and the bus stops. I regularly catch the No. 95 bus through the estate. The roads were too narrow particularly Lescarr Road. The drivers had to go onto the pavements and if 2 buses met it was chaos. There were still no permanent bus stops or bus shelters with people trying to wave buses down. It was a good 15 minutes walk between the 2 bus stops on the estate and drivers went past bus stops with people still on the bus because they did not know where the bus stops were.

Brian Edwards, SYMCA, agreed with the difficulties experienced. A small amount of funding had been made available from the Bus Services budget to provide bus stops where required and conversations had taken place with the developers to obtain some of their funding secured for improved services.

Parking problems were an ongoing issue. It was hoped that once the bus stops were properly marked up and legally enforceable it should alleviate some of the problems. It would also include a review of the traffic management around there as part of getting the bus stops in place.

Councillor Baggaley reported that there was a Waverley Steering Group that looked at active travel across the estate. There was some Section 106 funding for the bus stops that the developer was going to use and talk of 3/4 additional bus stops on the current routes. Officers had also looked at more of the route down to Catcliffe for bus stops if additional routes were put in. With regard to parking, RMBC officers were aware of the problems but it was currently in the ownership of Haworth. Work was currently taking place with Haworth to look at the options available.

Michael Moore, First Bus, reported that First ran the majority of the buses through the Waverley estate. One of the frustrations of new developments was that the bus stop infrastructure went in after the housing was built. He would urge the Council to consider bus stop infrastructure much earlier in a development's approvals process so that bus stops and accessible routes were in place before the vast majority of properties were sold.

The challenge with Waverley was it had been 10 years of the making and still did not have buses in place. There clearly needed to be a campaign of how to get people to use the bus through local engagement.

52. SEND TRANSPORT

In accordance with Minute No. 44(3) of the meeting held on 19th November, 2025, Paul Topham, Interim Transport Services Manager, attended the meeting and gave a verbal update on the current situation with regard to SEND transport provision.

Send Transport Provision

It was a local authority's statutory duty to provide travel assistance/transport where a child met the eligibility criteria. There was a Council Policy detailing the criteria available on the Council's website.

Budget

Each year there was an 8-10% increase in the demand for transport with applications received for children/pupils who were entitled to receive statutory travel assistance. So far in 2025/26 there had been 600 SEND applications had been received compared to 900 5 years ago.

1,400 children were transported per day over 314 routes consisting of inhouse minibus operation (approximately 23), external operators who provided a solution with minibus or taxi and then an offer, as an alternative, of either a personal travel budget or a personal travel claim. The budget was paid up front to parents/carers for them to organise their own transport whether it be themselves/family friend/relative etc. or a

personal travel claim which was paid retrospectively for mileage incurred based on the HMRC rate of 45p per mile.

Those 2 elements were based on 85% attendance rate at school. Payments were recovered or reduced payments if the attendance level fell below 85%.

The budget never really met what was required in terms of expenditure which had been recognised corporately due to the demonstrable evidence that the requirements to provide transport would never reduce and would continue to increase.

Independent Travel Training Scheme

The Service was trying to promote and develop further Independent Travel Training and provide those pupils who were assessed as being able to undertake travel independently. Training was provided, health and safety, risks, shadowing and all agreed with parents. In the 3 years that the scheme had been running, 50 young people were now trained independent travellers. It was planned to double that figure in the next 2 years.

For each child travel trained, it potentially saved the Council in terms of an actual seat on a vehicle, approximately £7,400.

There were a number of initiatives to promote greater independence for families including a personal transport budget or a personal travel claim.

A number of issues were raised by Members including:-

- Encouraging parents to consider other options other than the provided minibus. As stated above, personal transport budgets and travel claims were offered but it was not mandatory or statutory and could only be offered to parents/carers as an option
-
- The Transport Escalations and Exemptions Panel weekly challenged solo occupancy of taxis but it was often based on a young person's individual complex needs. Out-of-Borough transport was also a significantly high proportion of the Service's costs and the challenge was whether or not there was provision within the Borough or closer to the Borough instead of travelling significant distances. The Service was constantly challenging those aspects of service delivery to try and ascertain and maintain costs
- Where there was a requirement for taxi provision, a request would be put out to all the operators on the contract to submit a bid for that particular route based on what was required, how many children to be picked up, where from and where to. Each bid was then assessed in terms of whether it was the most effective and efficient use of resources

- Post-16 transport, according to current statutory guidance, was discretionary and had to be based on significant need. Rotherham did provide post-16 transport on a discretionary basis
- Acknowledgement that there had been significant journey times for young people. As from September 2025, every attempt had been made to accord with the statutory guidance i.e. no more than 45 minutes journey time for a primary aged young person and 1.15 for a secondary aged young person acknowledging that there could be exceptional circumstances such as a traffic accident etc.

Paul was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

Agreed:- That the information be noted.

53. **SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY TRANSPORT - UPDATE**

Brian Edwards, Assistant Director Bus Services SYMCA, gave the following update:-

Bus Services

Approximately 20% of the network was funded through SYMCA. A process to extend all contracts, or have all contracts in place at least through until at least the first tranche of franchising in September 2027, was almost complete. The next stage would be to consider stage 2 and 3 through to the completion of franchising estimated to be at the end of 2029.

With the budget available, services that operated under contract were in the process of being secured. It had been a challenge as a key part of the funding was from the Government's Bus Grant and, due to the introduction of a new measure to base grant allocations on, SYMCA had not been as successful as the previous year. Work was now taking place to ensure that all the services would be secured until at least September 2027.

Franchise

The first move into the market would be in March with the full tendering process for the first tranche (Sheffield and Doncaster) in June 2026, quickly moving onto Rotherham for the next tranche

Work was taking place with operators to ensure that stability was ensured whilst the franchising process was worked through. This was against a backdrop of challenging situations in terms of cost to the industry and passenger numbers.

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Pilot

The pilot was out to the market at the moment with the aim to bring it into

the Rotherham district and a separate scheme to Doncaster by early summer 2026. It was an option and there was a finite amount of money so it would be a challenge to continue in the long term but it would provide a lot of information and lessons learnt in terms of how DRT could play a part in the wider bus network particularly in areas where less populated and quiet times of the day where it was difficult for any operator to operate efficiently.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester queried the first tranche of franchising and whether it would impact routes that crossed border such as the X33?

Brian Edwards replied that the focus was mainly on services that currently operated out of the Olive Grove Sheffield Depot and the Doncaster Depot. He would ascertain if there was a definitive list of which services operated from which depot and whether that could be shared.

Agreed:- (1) That an update on the Demand Responsive Transport pilot be provided to the next meeting.

(2) That SYMCA provide information on the potential Dearne Valley/expanded Goldthorpe railway stations.

(3) That, if possible, SYMCA share information of which services operated from the Olive Grove Sheffield Depot and Doncaster Depot.

54. BUS OPERATORS - UPDATE

First Bus

Michael Moore reported that the routes First currently operated were not showing any huge challenges in terms of operation at the current time. There had been some problems in relation to trees last year which had caused issues in terms of the capacity that could be provided on vehicles. The aim was to run buses that were safe for the highways and where there were trees that overhung that could strike the vehicles, they did cause a safety risk to passengers.

First continued to see a challenge of buses running to/through/via Meadowhall and was mitigated as best it could. Since the closure of the Midland Road garage, some of the services had been split e.g. X2 and X11 with half of them running from Sheffield and the other from Doncaster. From Sunday 22nd February all the X2 service would run from the Sheffield garage giving more co-ordination of the service. It also had the added benefits of giving more opportunities to look to employing a wider rota from Rotherham people and encourage colleagues to drive buses in the Borough. There would be a pool of buses that worked in and out of Rotherham.

Councillor Currie, on behalf of Councillor Garnett, asked if there was any chance of the No. 139 bus being reinstated on Ox Close Avenue. The church and shops on St. John's Green were extremely popular but the

removal of the bus service had made a real difference and was alienating people from the good work being carried out in the community.

Michael Moore replied that he could not speak as to why that change had been made but it would be remiss to reinstate the service if it was not part of the franchise.

Agreed:- That SYMCA discuss further with Councillors Currie and Garnett and Rotherham Community Transport.

Stagecoach

John Young reported that period 10 had finished the previous week and had seen a dip in punctuality performance to 82.54% for the last 4 weeks. There had been a number of challenges particularly towards the end of January; there had been temporary traffic lights on Rawmarsh Hill which had caused significant delays, roadworks on Balby Road, Doncaster, which had impacted the No. 221, Ardsley Hill, Barnsley, and the traffic lights on Bank Street, Mexborough.

Stagecoach's punctuality for the 20 week period average was 86.88% which was a more respectable figure so overall was in fairly strong place. Reliability for period 10 was still very good at 99.76%; only 0.24% of journeys did not run but the journeys that did run were more likely to run late because of the issues aforementioned.

The network was stable and there were no service changes planned in the short to medium term. Stagecoach was in discussion with SYMCA to ensure a smooth process from now until the franchising started and there were some challenges which had already been touched upon at the meeting. Adult patronage was down significantly; it was not a Rotherham specific issue although it was highlighted particularly at the Rawmarsh Depot. It was a trend across the wider area and would appear across many parts of the UK that adult patronage had declined. It was a challenge for commercial bus operators because they were the group of people they got the most revenue from. Trading conditions were particularly challenging because costs were increasing. Concessionary fares were performing better as well as young people travel. The scheme in Barnsley – free travel for under 16s – had seen some knock-on effect on some of the services that ran into Rotherham cross boundary with Barnsley.

There had been a growth in the number of young people using public transport across all Stagecoach depots but nowhere near enough to counteract the significant decline that was being seen in the adult market.

Of Stagecoach's 5 depots, the depot that had seen greatest decline was Rawmarsh. The service delivery was extremely strong with a slight dip in punctuality but the overall trend had been very good for months. The fleet was in good order with almost half of the fleet being only one year old and consisting of electric vehicles.

A number of Stagecoach fares were still less than £3 - £2.60 or £2.70 and offered a range of day-a-week tickets such as the Silver ticket, that covered all Stagecoach buses across the whole of South Yorkshire, extended into West Yorkshire and allowed travel to Chesterfield at £6.50 a day or £23.50 for a week. There was also the Travelmaster and options to include tram, rail as well as bus.

The Barnsley MiCard worked on the same premise as an OAP concessionary fare with Stagecoach receiving a concessionary reimbursement. The scheme had been extremely successful with Barnsley outperforming expectations.

The £2 price cap had probably generated some new travellers but when it had increased to £3 it depended upon how often the passenger was travelling and for a lot of customers they paid a single fare which was less than the £3.

Rotherham Community Transport

Adrian Parkinson had submitted his apologies.

55. RAILWAY OPERATORS - UPDATE

Northern Rail

Richard Isaacs gave the following performance update for the most recent period:-

On time	62.3% - above target
Time to 3	82.7% - slightly above target
Time to 15	98.6% - slightly above target
Cancellations	2.1% - slightly above target

The restructure had now been completed and the performance for South and East Yorkshire was:

On time	60.9% slightly below target
Time to 3	81.3% slightly below target
Time to 15	98.4% above target
Cancellations	1.9% above target

There had been some issues with a fire in Standish Tunnel which came across the Pennines resulting in a knock on effect throughout Yorkshire in terms of serviceability but generally performance was moving in the right direction.

There was a major session for tracks maintenance on 22nd February between Sheffield, Retford and Lincoln. A bus replacement service would operate on the Sunday.

The Yorkshire Flyer had been launched with Mayor Brabbin (West

Yorkshire Combined Authority) at Leeds Station. This cut the journey time to 47 minutes to Leeds and Sheffield with one stop at Wakefield. This added an extra 30,000 seats a week to the service.

Northern Rail was saying goodbye to Alan Hope, the Station Manager for South Yorkshire, who was retiring. He had looked after stations for 40 years.

In the wider rail industry, London North-Western Railway and West Midlands Railway had joined DFTO (DfT Operator Ltd) so as the move towards to Great British Railway progressed, there were more and more operators moving back into DFTO.

On 14th February there were to be major engineering works at Manchester Picadilly which would affect services down the Hope Valley into South Yorkshire.

Northern Rail had worked closed with the Combined Authority in Leeds with regard to youth engagement and getting young people enthused about the improvements to Leeds Station. The outcome had been fed through to the Talking Transport events which Mayor Brabin had been holding across the region.

Similarly in North Yorkshire, there was to be an event on 13th February with young people at York Station to look at the major improvements taking place to increase capacity from 10M to 20M over the next few years.

Last month was International Faith Day so work had taken place within the industry regarding faith in the workplace and working with the faith leaders in Leeds. There had been an opportunity for the managers to visit the temple, synagogue and mosque to learn about the different faiths.

The Chair stated that, at the last Council meeting, a motion had been passed calling for train services to be reinstated at Swinton Interchange and Rotherham Central to pre-covid levels.

Richard reported that, in terms of the fast service, it was direct to Sheffield and did not go via Swinton. He would take the question away and report to the next meeting.

Councillor Harper also pointed out that there was a large number of trains that only had 2 carriages and was always full. Why could there not be a third carriage given the number of passengers.

Richard agreed to look at capacity and overcrowding issue on that line. Northern Rail was finding unit availability a real challenge at the moment and had seen a real shift from the commuter market to the weekend market with the latter being the predominant market.

Northern Rail was moving to a new fleet procurement process hopefully for delivery in 2033/34. There were some units that required replacing and took a significant amount of maintenance.

The age requirement to become a train driver had been lowered. Moving forward, Northern Rail would become a Centre of Train Driving Training in the north and had 12 new driver assimilation units on order based in Leeds. Work continued with Rotherham College but Richard emphasised that there were lots of opportunities within the rail industry particularly in the north of the country.

The Chair asked if there was anything the Council could do to help promote the activity carried out by Northern Rail and promoting the career opportunities available for young people.

Richard stated that what was working for Northern Rail in North and West Yorkshire was "if you can see it you can be it" approach. They would prefer to bring in small groups of young people to speak to the teams, speak to other young people, young people that sounded like them, came from Rotherham, and worked in the rail industry. That was the preferred approach; a much more targeted approach so if the young person was interested in social media/train driver/engineer they were much more smaller targeted events that could deliver those candidates through to Northern.

Agreed:- That Northern Rail provide an update at the next meeting on Swinton Interchange and Rotherham Central and the possibility of increasing train services to that of pre-covid levels as well as the capacity/overcrowding issues raised.

56. RMBC TRANSPORTATION UNIT - UPDATES

Nat Porter, Interim Head of Transportation Infrastructure, gave the following verbal update on the work of the Transport Infrastructure Service:-

2026/27

The main line of work currently was pulling together programmes for the coming financial year. A report proposing the recommended Transport Capital Programme 2026/27 would be submitted to Cabinet in March. Shortly before that the Officer Delegated Decision in respect of the prioritisation of crossings programme would go to Directors for approval by the end of February.

The Service was in the very early stages of liaising with SYMCA in assisting in pulling together the Transport for City Regions Programme 2027-32.

Major Schemes

The City Region Sustainable Transport Schemes were presently currently

forecast to be subject to public consultation during March. There had been some delays due to working through some budget pressures and had been subject to the valuation engineering process to ensure the schemes were affordable and delivered best value.

Smaller Schemes

Work was continuing on the Minor Works Programme and, subject to Council budget setting, the future programme would be developed.

Not all Wards had been visited as yet but liaison would take place with the Neighbourhood Teams to organise them. For those Wards that had had the briefing, work was now underway where forms and processes were being finalised for submission for Ward-funded works for the next financial year onwards.

It was noted that the recruitment process for the permanent Head of Services was reaching its conclusion so it was likely to be Nat's last meeting in this role.

The Chair thanked Nat for his work and contributions to the meeting and the support and guidance he had provided to him personally as Cabinet Member.

57. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business for consideration.