

SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

Thursday 29 April 2021

PRESENT:

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| J. Hoare | (Chair) |
| N. Spetch | (Vice Chair/Rotherham TUG) |
| D Wrottesley | (Hope Valley Rail User Group) |
| I. Jenkinson | (Sheffield TUG/Member of the public) |
| M. Wilson | (Member of the public) |
| Cllr D. Leech | |

GUESTS:

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| R. Cowling | (SYPTTE) |
| T. Taylor | (SYPTTE) |
| C. Sadler | (SYPTTE) |
| M. Farmer | (SYPTTE) |
| M. McGowan | (First) |
| N. Wragg | (Supertram) |
| A. Bray (XC) | |
| A. Khayum | |
| J. Young (Stagecoach) | |

1. OPEN AND WELCOME

The meeting was opened, and all welcomed to another on-line meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

John Brightmore gave his apologies.

3. FORWARD PLANNER

TT gave an update on Mass Transit Renewal and the Outline Business Case for the asset renewal. TT advised SYPTTE is carrying out a reassessment of economic and financial assumptions within the OBC as the impact of Covid has rendered these inaccurate.

TT said we will be in discussion with DfT around the financing of the OBC.

Q. D. Wrottesley: Is a consideration of refurbishing the tram fleet to research what is happening across the continent, rather than just with U.K. operators?

A. T. Taylor: Yes, we will soon be appointing a vehicle advisor who will take in a range of views and options, including engaging with a number of operators

TT gave an outline of the funding options that operators have been benefitting from since the start of the pandemic. He added that all funding timelines are currently set around the roadmap date of 21 June, especially taking into consideration the removal of social distancing measures.

SYLTE is unaware of what funding arrangements will be in place up until the 21 June date and will continue to plan what changes may need to be made to the network with the level of financial support. Discussions are ongoing with DfT.

SYLTE has challenged DfE on their two-week notice period for school bus services in order to ensure operators are in the right place.

4. NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY AND SCR BUS FUNDING PACKAGE

Action: Provide a link to the National Bus Strategy document

SYLTE is working to review the National Bus Strategy and what it means for South Yorkshire. The PTE will consult with local authorities with a view towards enhanced bus partnerships so that the region can continue to benefit from funding.

Q. D. Wrottesley: Bus shelters on Pinstone St say the alterations are due to Covid. These should surely say they are permanent given the city's plans. I'm very concerned about the arrangements the council has made and used Covid as an opportunity.

A. T. Taylor: The initial closure of Pinstone and Leopold Streets were to allow for social distancing on the footways. Those arrangements are now permanent; however, Sheffield did enter into a consultation on the Transforming Cities Fund project this is covered by, and we are awaiting the feedback from this.

Q. N. Spetch: A survey was carried out saying UK adults largely expect to travel as they did before the pandemic, with a car domination returning. However, a decrease in the U.K. workforce planned to return to their workplace as restrictions eased and an increase was seen in respondents saying they won't consider public transport after the pandemic. Public transport is more expensive in contrast to the car cost of the journey, so it's no surprise the public are not willing to travel by public transport.

A. T. Taylor: Full-time office working is unlikely to return anytime soon. People are also staying local and avoiding city centers. Footfall and usage vary significantly across the region, even at suburb level. We continue to review the service level requirements and consider the future of public transport services as a result of attitude changes. It's a difficult question to see how we encourage public transport when the public see so many benefits to discretionary car use.

Q. D. Wrottesley: Dan Jarvis said if we wanted a bus franchise, we'd have to find the money to pay for it, however operators weren't keen on the idea. Is it something being looked into?

A. T. Taylor: Franchising is not something being looked into for South Yorkshire. As part of the bus strategy, either franchising or enhanced partnerships are required as a minimum. However, this decision is ultimately down to the MCA.

Q. N. Wragg: There has been a bus partnership in parts of the region for a decade, and operators are working with the PTE to deliver on items to make a better, more coordinated service. Operators are working hard to bring back a better public transport service

A. T. Taylor: I echo the points made by Nigel. Existing bus partnerships put us in a good place already to work towards the requirements of the bus review.

TT mentioned the announcement of the one-year 18-21 concession. This would extend the access to the 80p fare for the duration of the scheme, and we are planning on launching this from 21 June.

TT also mentioned the shelter and PID upgrades as part of the MCA package of recovery investment. £3.2m was set aside in Gainshare funding for this. A shelter replacement plan will be put in place for this, and we will be looking at introducing up to 250 PIDs in the first year of the program.

Community Transport will receive part of the gainshare funding to improve their fleet and head towards electric vehicles.

Q. I. Jenkinson: Will the Concessionary fare scheme only apply to SY residents?

A. T. Taylor: Yes, you will have to prove you live in the region as with existing concessions to benefit from the pass. This includes university students in SY properties or halls of residence.

5. RAIL DEVELOPMENTS

MF told the group about the Manchester Taskforce Recovery Group (MTRF) and the work including timetable solutions to work towards reduced congestion in the area. The report found a level of trade-offs would have to

be accepted to make improvements to the timetables, and this went to public consultation earlier this year.

Rail North came together to review the proposals and see which would be the preferred option for the area, however this did not manage to happen. As such, the MTRF looked into a hybrid option and developing another timetable to reach the needs of Rail North, however this work is ongoing.

Only one option retained the direct South Yorkshire service to Manchester Airport, held for 25 years, which led to controversy. This option has since disappeared so South Yorkshire fast services would be to Liverpool under planned arrangements.

Q. D. Wrottesley: At no stage during the planning was a third express Manchester service considered. I am concerned that the Manchester-based review is ignoring the requirements of Sheffield people.

A. M. Farmer: There are two working groups, including a Manchester Recovery Infrastructure group which is reviewing Hope Valley works. The ongoing consultations and plans are being led by the Timetable group. The Infrastructure Roadmap is being considered but will be further in future.

Q. N. Spetch: Loadings on airport services between the city and the airport are very light. It's also quicker to change at Stockport to a bus to get to the airport. If the service continues elsewhere, it also makes it more difficult to connect onto the airport.

A. M. Farmer: This has been reviewed with a view to a cross-platform connection, however the review is finding the balance of travelling with a reliable journey in the area. There is a fine line as to what is best on travel on these routes, and we still don't know what the outcome would be. But we continue to fight for the airport service.

Q. D. Wrottesley: Platforms 13 and 14 are already congested, so even this connection can be horrendous. Why is a second service to Liverpool being considered, when there is no connectivity to northwest Lancashire i.e. Preston and Bolton?

A. M. Farmer: The aspiration for the third Hope Valley train would be a northwest-bound service. However, we will continue to see what the current requirements are.

MF advised the group that the Hope Valley capacity upgrade is still on target for delivery in 2023. Infrastructure improvements at stations like Dore and Topley, however, are not able to be delivered until January next year as there is a long design process before this.

Q. I. Jenkinson: What kind of engineering possessions are going to be required to deliver this going forward and what sort of disruptions are we likely to see?

A. M. Farmer: There will be disruption over the next year for the line. Bus replacement will be required for the local stations, however the TPE fast service would be operated via Huddersfield. This is slightly longer but does still offer a Manchester rail service. However, the Transpennine Route Upgrade works have to be planned too to avoid both fast transpennine routes from being lost.

MF announced the bid to restore Waverley station was successful and will now approach DfT to move to the next stage of the process to get the station restored.

MF advised of a second fast Sheffield to Leeds service, as part of the Arriva franchise agreement when they won Northern. However, this was never delivered, and the commitment wasn't transferred to the Operator of Last Resort. SYPTE and WYCA are still interested in this and are now working with the operators and TfN to put this back on the table.

Q. D. Wrottesley:

A. M. Farmer: The original idea was for the Nottingham service to be diverted as the second express, however this idea was not liked and has been requested to be ignored preferring an additional service. This service is in the mix with the East Coast mainline.

Q. I. Jenkinson: There was also a bid in for passenger services on the X line, as well as Stocksbridge?

A. M. Farmer: These are all part of the same works led by Sheffield City Region and are all work in progress at the moment. All are very much on the table.

There has been a lot of momentum in recent months to increase frequency on the Penistone Line. In January, SCR, SYPTE, WYCA and Kirklees Council jointly commissioned a feasibility study into the options on this route. The idea behind this study is to have a strategic outline business case for the Levelling Up fund.

6. UPDATE FROM OPERATORS

Bus

MM from First advised they are running close to capacity, with 50% of pre-covid customers. The operator is getting close to no longer being able to reshuffle buses to manage to fit customers in. There is not much First can do until restrictions are relaxed.

JY from Stagecoach said Stagecoach is also getting close to 50% capacity and has no spare resource. Some capacity issues are starting to be seen, and resource is being shuffled to try and support this, however there is only so much that can be done. Peak times are now flatter, with more travel

happening at midday. Stagecoach welcomes the National Bus Strategy, which makes many sensible suggestions. Stagecoach will always continue to work with partners and listen to customers, but all operators will need to up their game and be ready to make quicker change post-pandemic. However, more political decisions are going to need to be made, such as bus priority etc. Stagecoach punctuality has never been better, however with traffic levels rising there are concerns over the impact this will have. No service changes are planned at the current time, and Stagecoach continues to follow DfT guidance.

Tram

NW advised passenger levels are close to 50% of pre-covid, creating some capacity issues in the morning. However, new peak times tend to be around 11:00 with small levels of commuter traffic. Upcoming rail works will mean there are no tram services from 22:00 on 8 May until 10:00 on 9 May, and information will be provided soon.

Train

AB from CrossCountry said the May 21 timetable is relatively unchanged. With an increase in people travelling, people may soon have to make their own decision surrounding travelling as social distancing may become more difficult. Extra capacity is being provided where possible. Kings Cross closure in June is likely to lead to busyness on CrossCountry services and in Sheffield. CrossCountry is set to move to Platform 2 to improve reliability.

Q. D. Wrottesley: Are unscheduled shunts in Derby or Sheffield?

A. A. Bray: From May, there are a number of unbooked shunts on the Midlands Main Line timetable.

7. MEMBERS ITEMS/RAISED BY OTHER USER GROUPS

BTUG:

- *Flexible ticketing in light of changing working patterns as a result of the pandemic*

TT: The aforementioned bus strategy does mention an approach to flexible ticketing. SY's multi-operator ticket provider is looking into a flexi-ticketing option, and both heavy and light rail operators are reviewing this.

NW: Stagecoach Bus are awaiting clarification as under current funding, new tickets can't be introduced. Supertram is well aware of the interest and will look into this.

- *National Bus Strategy - Bus Franchising*
This has been covered, see Item 4

RTUG:

- *Inaccessible ticket machines at stations and penalty fares*

N. Spetch: Kiveton Park, among others, have relatively inaccessible ticket machines in comparison to the platform location. As such, customers are receiving penalty fares as it can be difficult to obtain a ticket.

MF: I can take this up on behalf of the group to Northern.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

CS and RC mentioned the new approach to encourage higher attendance at User Group meetings, including working with Councillors and stakeholders.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 21 July 2021, 10.30am

Wednesday 20 October 2021, 10.30am