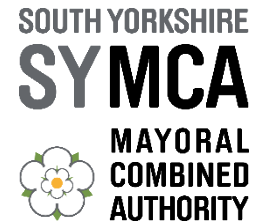


South Yorkshire Transport User Group

Minutes

19 July 2023



Present:

J. Hoare	Chair/Doncaster TUG
N. Spetch	Vice Chair/Rotherham TUG
G. Arthur	Barnsley TUG
F. Postlethwaite	Barnsley TUG
I. Jenkinson	Sheffield TUG
D. Wrottersley	Sheffield TUG
R. Morris	Sheffield TUG
M. Wilson	Sheffield TUG
J. Morton	Sheffield TUG

Guests:

J. Young	Stagecoach Yorkshire
M. McGowan	First South Yorkshire
A. Bray	CrossCountry
R. Isaac	Northern
R. Brennan Brown	SYMCA
W. Dunnett	SYMCA
A. Wright	SYMCA
R. Cowling	SYMCA

1. **Open and welcome**

The meeting was opened, and all were welcomed.

2. **Appoint a new Chair**

J. Hoare announced he was standing down as Chair and nominated I. Jenkinson. This was seconded by J. Morton.

I. Jenkinson took the chair and thanked J. Hoare for his work and dedication to the role.

3. **Apologies for absence**

D. Allsop, J. Brightmore, N. Wragg, I. Fothergill

4. Minutes of previous meeting

N. Spetch raised his concerns again about the complexity of ticketing and felt his previous comments had been ignored.

J Young advised that N. Spetch's comments had been discussed at the TravelMaster meeting as promised for consideration. However, this is not something that can be changed overnight.

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

5. Update from operators

Tram:

R. Cowling advised the group of the upcoming Tramlines festival at Hillsborough Park – Friday 21 July – Sunday 23 July and the Rail Replacement works from 24 July to 7 August in the Hillsborough and Shalesmoor areas and the impact these works would have on tram and bus services. Customers are advised to visit the Travel South Yorkshire website or call Traveline for details as well as looking out for information on our social media channels.

Bus:

A. Wright updated the group on bus patronage and 23 July service changes stating that there has been an extension on existing evening and Sunday journeys with contracts until the end of October 2023.

The Government's £2 fare cap has been extended until 31 October when it will be increased to £2.50 for 13 months.

Stagecoach – J. Young advised they will be running services 10 and 10a in Sheffield from 23 July, following the SYMCA funded contract award.

20 new double decker vehicles will be introduced in Sheffield soon running on the 120 route. 23 new electric vehicles will also be introduced from January 2024 bringing a step change in ride quality on services 22X and 221. The frequency of the 221 will remain at current 30 minutes.

J. Morton raised concerns about reliability of services 57 and 57a and the impact it has on Stocksbridge residents in particular, as they have no alternative, and stated the SL services should be reinstated.

J. Young responded advising he has attended a number of local meetings to discuss this. As an operator they face challenges and try to maintain services as scheduled. This cannot always be possible due to factors outside their control such as roadworks, congestion etc.

Patronage is currently around 70% of pre-Covid figures and with an increase in operation costs and a reduced revenue to feed back into the network it is unlikely that frequencies can be returned to pre-Covid levels. We need to manage expectations. Even if 100% of pre-Covid patronage was reached, this would still not be enough to keep pace with the

rising costs. Realistically, operators would need at least 120% of pre-Covid patronage to be able to increase service frequency.

If the current funding is removed alternative funding sources would need to be found to maintain existing services/increase service levels.

First – M. McGowan advised about the new technology for timetables intended to improve reliability - changing the style and moving away from 'clockface' timetables. This has been positively received in other areas of the country. They will gradually roll these out to see what impact they have in the region.

N. Spetch expressed his concerns that the new technology/timetables would not be well received.

J. Young disagreed and stated that operators need help from groups such as this to bring in bus measures to improve reliability etc.

The First app has been updated to make it easier to use.

No update on the launch of Tap-On, Tap-Off in the region. The technology has been installed on First buses but not yet activated. Alternative names are being considered and a marketing campaign needs to be launched to promote it.

Train:

Cross Country – A. Bray advised that services were running well, and some services will still run throughout the upcoming strikes – 20, 22 and 29 July.

Old units are being/have been removed from services. There are plans to double up on carriages on busier services.

Patronage is at 75% - most leisure journeys.

Comments were made about overcrowding on some Derby services on Sundays and this was attributed smaller units being used as other units were moved in preparation for services the following day.

Northern - R. Isaac had technical difficulties but asked R. Cowling to circulate Northern's presentation relating to the proposed closure of ticket offices. Members were encouraged to give the feedback via the Transport Focus consultation by 26 July (Northern's consultation is open until 28 July).

R. Cowling updated the group on the impact of the station ticket offices in the region:

- In SY this would mean 6 out of the 8 ticket offices would close, with staff moving out on the platforms. Sheffield and Doncaster will see minor changes, but all ticket offices at Northern stations would close: Barnsley, Meadowhall, Mexborough, Rotherham, Swinton and Thorne North
- The platform-based staff will be there to help people use the ticket machines and with many other issues, but the hours these will be available are significantly less than current ticket office opening times.

- As people may have seen in the news, five regional mayors are considering collective legal action in response to the proposals. There is quite an extensive [article on the SYMCA News page](#) should people want to review.
- Depending on how the legal challenge pans out, we will be doing a response to each station as this is required under the process. We recognise there will be unique issues at each station, such as accessibility at Thorne North and the different staffing solutions proposed at each station.
- The responses will cover many aspects, from parts of society that prefer to use cash, to accessibility, and the environmental impact of pushing more people to using cars.

ACTION: RC to circulate Northern's presentation.

Post meeting update: presentation circulated 21 July

6. Covid recovery funding for bus and tram

During the pandemic a Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) was received which ended on 30 June 2023. SYMCA have been given further funding from BSOG+ until 2024. However, this is roughly 50% of the original BRG amount and SYMCA are working through the implications of the reduced funding levels for services. There is still no long-term plan for funding.

Operators costs have increased resulting in higher priced tender returns and in some cases no bids being submitted. We will provide what we can within the resources available.

7. EP Forum

F. Postlethwaite updated the group on the Enhanced Partnership Forum:

The Forum has met every 2 months since the autumn of 2022. Representation of passenger groups/individuals has increased since the start of this year. BBSY has 4 reps, one from each part of South Yorkshire, and a member of Transport for All is a regular attender, helping focus on needs of passengers with disabilities.

The Forum began by working on a new Customer Charter which is due to be published in July. This will be displayed and included on the website.

Some key points included following discussion at the Forum were:

- A clearer complaints procedure which enables problems to be logged more efficiently
- A last bus guarantee
- Figures for expected/target rates of punctuality and reliability will be included (based on BSIP)
- Passenger reps raised the problem of service changes not being displayed in advance at bus stops – future changes will be notified in advance on the website but will not be displayed at stops until the changes take place

Alongside work on the Charter, the Forum has begun a series of “deep dives” into issues agreed as of particular concern: reliability, punctuality and ticketing. The next deep dive will be focused on network design.

Each deep dive has led to points which are passed on to the EP Board.

At the last meeting the member from Transport 4 All presented a paper focused on accessibility, particularly the needs of wheelchair users.

Passenger involvement in the Forum is important in giving the perspective of service users. The discussions at the Forum have highlighted issues around bus services. However, what is very clear is that most of the concerns which most affect passengers cannot be adequately addressed under the terms of the Enhanced Partnership

Some possible solutions need to be carefully considered before implementation – for example some reduction of bus stops was suggested as a way to improve punctuality – but it is important that communities' needs are taken into account before this is done. It could end up being counterproductive if it reduces the accessibility of bus stops.

8. Franchising

R. Brennan Brown introduced himself to the group, explained his role and advised the group on progress to date.

SYMCA is currently working through data and undertaking a 5-stage business case process. The plan is to present findings in September. If the SYMCA is comfortable we will move to an audit for validation (8 week process) and then on to public consultation before making a decision on whether to move to franchising by February next year.

9. Tram – SYMCA ownership and operation

W. Dunnett introduced himself to the group and talked them through a presentation about bringing the tram under public control when Supertram's concession ends in March 2024. Activities to mobilise Supertram to come under public control are in progress. Near future milestones include determining the governance structures, setting up legal entity, developing the outline Service Level Agreement supported by a business plan and transitioning contracts and preparing for TUPE arrangements. The aim is for a seamless, safe transition in March 2024. The presentation is attached for information.

10. Members items

Nothing raised

11. Any other business

No items raised

12. Date of next meetings:

Thursday 19 October 2023, 10.30am
Thursday 18 January 2024, 10.30am
Thursday 18 April 2024, 10.30am
Thursday 18 July 2024, 10.30am
Thursday 17 October 2024, 10.30am