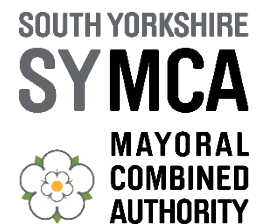


South Yorkshire Transport User Group

Minutes

20 July 2022



Present:

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

Guests:

D. Fletcher	First South Yorkshire
J. Young	Stagecoach Yorkshire
R. Cowling	SYMCA
D. Jones	CrossCountry
A. Wright	SYMCA
P. Beijer	SYMCA

1. **Open and welcome**

The meeting was opened, and all were welcomed.

2. **Apologies for absence**

Nigel Wragg (Supertram), Lisa Maloney (Northern), Alex Bray (CrossCountry), Tim Taylor (SYMCA), David Ellis (Stagecoach).

3. **Minutes of previous meeting**

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

Actions from previous meeting: None outstanding

4. **Update from operators**

Tram:

NW sent his apologies, so RC provided an update. Supertram is currently running at around 70% of pre-covid patronage levels. There have been service interruptions caused by overhead line work, along with rail strikes and excessive temperatures. Tramlines this weekend and additional services added to help festival goers leave the venue each evening.

Train:

DJ gave general overview of rail operations. CrossCountry leisure patronage back to pre-Covid levels, although journeys are generally shorter. General commute journeys still below pre-Covid levels with doubts they will return due to change in working methods. Planned strikes in July and August will impact journeys and customers are advised to check before they travel.

Bus:

Stagecoach: JY updated the group - patronage around 70% of pre-Covid levels. He advised that some operators are experiencing staff shortages, which is leading to on-the-day cancellations. However, they are running vast majority of services. Training school is busy with trainee drivers but can take up to 3 months to train a driver whereas one leaving the organisation only has to give 1 weeks' notice. Excessive temperatures earlier this week affected service delivery, but these instances are rare and customer and employee health is priority. JY advised they are in close discussion Marketing campaigns in place to encourage ENCTS pass holders back onto buses as these have been the lowest return. JY also updated the group on revised flexible ticket range – adapted to changing market. Unable to increase frequency or introduce additional services as insufficient drivers available to cover. Pay is a factor but increased pay and improved conditions introduced. Shift working could be a factor so Stagecoach are trying to recruit people specifically for late shifts and encourage part time working.

First: DF advised that patronage similar to Stagecoach at around 69% of pre-Covid levels with only 53% concessionary travel. Driver availability is a big issue with 71 drivers short in South Yorkshire. Changes in July are to tendered services with no changes to commercial routes.

A discussion was held around need for introduction of congestion and car parking charging and more to be done to reduce the impact of climate change.

The group discussed the need for a national policy change to encourage the use of public transport over the car and GA updated the group on Better Buses for SY activities.

Q. DW – why are Arriva striking and why they have had no service cancellations

A. JY advised it was over pay and advised like all bus operators Arriva have suffered with driver shortages and have had to reduce Saturday services as a result.

Q. JB asked why services are so poor at the moment

A. JY advised of the difficult operational environment affecting everyone across the country.

5. Covid recovery funding for bus and tram

AW advised that from October, when funding ends, there is expected to be a reduction in the network unless passenger/customer numbers increase, which are still well below pre-Covid levels. Options are being considered for tendered services to plug gaps.

6. **Enhanced Partnership and Franchising Assessment**

EP

PB updated the group on the Enhanced Partnership. Although SYMCA was not awarded funding from central government, SYMCA is still moving forward to deliver plans from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - now known as the EP Plan. A governance arrangement and forum have been established to draw out government funding:

- I. EP Board – focus on remit to driver forward/improve customer experience – first meeting was in June
- II. EP Development Group – to continue to develop activities - over 40 activities identified. There is currently no funding, but SYMCA is seeking capital funding sources to drive these activities forward.
- III. Operating Group – day to day performance improving – e.g. car parking enforcement, structural interventions on routes etc. – First meeting on 20 July.
- IV. Customer Forum – Looking at possible attendees including representatives from public transport users inc. rail, car users, council, cycling groups, transport user groups, schools and universities, youth parliament, bus operators, SYMCA and other CAs, Community officers etc.

The EP plan has four key targets:

- To driver customer volumes in a positive upward direction
- Customer satisfaction
- Improved journey times
- Improve reliability

Q. FP asked when the forum would commence

A. PB advised the group membership needs to be diverse, representing public transport users, those who have never used public transport and those who have lapsed. Once the membership has been established the first meeting is hoped to take place before the end of September and will be influential in helping shape the Customer Charter.

Q. How will the group/forum address the challenges faced come October when government funding ends and services will be cut.

A. The partnership will help SYMCA to take steps to improve customer experience and services. We will be issuing tenders to try to plug gaps in the network with the limited funding available and tenders will be specified for different operations e.g. separate for evening, early morning and weekend services. Usually, they would specified as one.

Q. NS asked why integrated transport system isn't being considered including cycling and walking

A. PB advised SYMCA and partners are looking at various initiatives to integrate with light and heavy rail including initiatives with e-bikes and mobility hubs with charging points etc.

DJ advised Derbyshire were successful in their bid for government funding for their BSIP and are looking at integration schemes, but it takes time.

Franchising

PB advised the group that the franchising assessment required from DfT needs to present a strategic, commercial, financial, and management case and needs regional support and demonstrate need for change. The assessment will look at the scope of works considering whether depots are included in the franchise. SYMCA have resource in place to look at casework and compare a do minimum with do maximum options, e.g. EP as do minimum but will franchising allow us to do that better.

Q. FP stated she understood that data was being requested from operators and appointments were required progress the works, but progress seems to be slow

A. PB advised an interim working group has been established to keep the momentum going data collection will be carried out over the summer. Recruitment process is slow, but works are going on behind the scenes.

7. Post Covid bus network from October – Public engagement July/August

SYMCA currently decides where public money for buses is spent using a policy that includes different criteria. This criteria prioritises where bus contracts should be made across different groups of services. For example, buses to schools, places of work, health services, in rural areas or at evenings and weekends.

SYMCA will soon be seeking people's views to make sure we are best using the public money we have to support South Yorkshire's bus network, by paying for contracted buses where people rely on them most. Details will be available shortly and the group is encouraged to take part.

Information about how to have your say on how this spending is prioritised will be available at the beginning of August, at travelsouthyorkshire.com, in interchanges, via Traveline and publicised across social media, radio and the press.

8. Any Other Business

None

9. Dates of future meetings

The next meeting date was confirmed as Wednesday 19 October, 10.30am.