

SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

Thursday 21 January 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)
Murray Wilson	(Member of the public)
Cllr David Leech	

GUESTS:

R. Cowling	(SYPTTE)
T Taylor	(SYPTTE)
C. Whittaker	(SYPTTE)
C.Sadler	(SYPTTE)
John Young	(Stagecoach)
Nigel Eggleton	(First)
P. Hopkinson	(First)
Pete Myers	(Northern)

1. OPEN AND WELCOME

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dan Windmill from Arriva and Alex Bray from CrossCountry.

3. COVID RECOVERY AND FUNDING

TT proceeded to give an update on all things Covid-related and the importance of keeping bus, tram and train services running particularly for key/critical workers and schools as we enter our third National Lockdown. Funding is still in place via DfT to make up any revenue shortfall experienced by operators. Currently unsure of end date due to ongoing lockdown but bus funding is on an eight week notice period and Tram funding secured until April. Patronage is around 25% of pre-Covid averages on bus and even lower on the rail network.

Dft have been clear that a reduction in services is needed as 100% of the network is not currently required. The new timetables have been engineered to still cover key routes.

A draft version of the recovery plan has been submitted to DfT for the tram network.

TT confirmed that we will be working hard with operators on the recovery effort for buses to encourage patronage and confidence back onto the network. A recovery plan will be developed over the next three to six months.

Face covering compliance is generally good and there are posters around Interchanges and bus stops to remind people of this.

Q. D Wrottersley: Are you convinced services cater specifically for NHS workers?

A. T Taylor: Yes, services are protected such as early morning and late evening. Further changes are being made this weekend but retaining journeys for those who need them.

Q. J Hoare: Will services be restored post-lockdown/Covid to encourage people to use public transport?

A. T Taylor: We need to strike a balance but the plan is to restore to near 100% of pre-Covid network. This is, however, dependent on the National decision.

4. OPERATOR UPDATES

Bus

Nigel Eggleton gave an update on behalf of First. Currently a third of staff are on furlough. No staffing problems to report but self-isolating has peaks and troughs. Face mask compliance on board vehicle can be challenging for drivers as they cannot enforce.

John Young gave an update on behalf of Stagecoach. Patronage is around 30% of pre-covid, did rise to 50% before Christmas but Lockdown 3 combined with bad weather has seen another drop in patronage and impact on service provision. Timetable changes come into effect from 25/26 January so will review and may make changes based on customer feedback. However, with less congestion on the roads, buses are generally running to time.

Condolences and praise were given to Fred Johnson, who passed away from Covid last year, for his contribution to the group.

Tram

TT updated on Supertram in the absence of an attendee.

There have been some frequency reductions in the service, mainly on an evening but maintaining early morning journeys. Flooding has affected Rotherham Central Station which has meant Tram/Train services were unable to run. There were some staffing issues prior to Christmas which resulted in short term cancellations of services but these have now resumed.

Train

Pete Myers gave an update on behalf of Northern Rail. Rotherham Central station is closed due to flooding so affecting services that would normally pass through there. A short-term lockdown timetable was introduced from 18 January 2021 at the request of DfT.

5. MEMBERS ITEMS/RAISED BY OTHER USER GROUPS

DTUG:

- Has providing a link into the DSA airport off the Lincoln Line been explored now that the ECML project has been rejected?

It would be very easy and cheap to put a spur off that line into a station at the airport mirroring the setup at Manchester airport where trains simply pull into what effectively is a dead end and then reverse out again back to where they came from. That line also is easily accessible from the North or the South and is far less busy than the ECML.

We are currently undertaking some further feasibility work to look at the possibility of a rail spur to serve the airport, either by tram-train or heavy rail, along with the provision of a local station on the existing Lincoln Line, Once this work is completed, we will be presenting the options to the Mayoral Combined Authority to agree the preferred option(s) to take forward.

- Could plans to extend the tram train network be accelerated? Doncaster is keen for the tram train to run from Rotherham to Doncaster and the airport.

The extension of tram-train from Rotherham to Doncaster is part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme being led by Transport for the North. They are looking at ways to accelerate this scheme.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

John Young raised the fact that attendance on the TUG calls is low and asked what could be done to encourage more attendees, fresh ideas and a greater representation of the customer base. He had recently attended BTUG and no members of the public were in attendance.

Action – TT/RC/DD to meet and discuss options.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday 29 April 2021, 10.30am
Wednesday 21 July 2021, 10.30am
Wednesday 20 October 2021, 10.30am