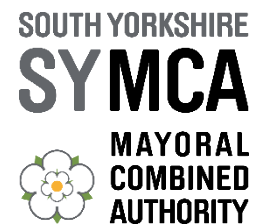


South Yorkshire Transport User Group

Minutes

15 January 2026



Present:

I. Jenkinson	Chair
J. Brightmore	Member of the public
B. Riley	Member of the public
C. Nash	Member of the public
C. Khan	Member of the public
N. Spetch	Member of the public
F. Postlethwaite	Better Buses for SY
Cllr J. Morton	Parish councillor

Guests:

N. Wragg	Supertram
G. Roome	Stagecoach
H. Roberts	SYMCA
R. Cowling	SYMCA
C. Payne	SYMCA
G. Selby	East Midlands Railway

1. Open and welcome

The meeting was opened, and all were welcomed. Introductions were made around the group.

2. Apologies for absence

D. Allsopp, S. Bennett, Cllr Higginbottom, R. Isaac, Cllr B. Miskell, J. Sharp, J. Young

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2025 were accepted as a true record.
No matters arising.

4. Transport Integration

Franchising progress and next steps

C. Payne shared slides (attached) and talked the group through the public engagement approach SYMCA is taking through the franchising process and what the franchising team will be doing over the coming months.

The vision is for every resident in SY to understand what bus franchising means and how they can share their experiences to help shape the bus services.

The aim is for buses to run on time and for it to be easier for people to get to key destinations.

Franchised services are planned to run in Sheffield and Doncaster from September 2027 and Barnsley and Rotherham from 2028.

Public engagement will take place from Thursday 12 February to Thursday 26 March with drop-in sessions online, in libraries, Interchanges and community centres so people can chat with the franchising team about proposed changes to 30 routes between 2027 and 2029.

Pricing and ticketing planning is underway and procurement to determine who will run the routes will take place in the spring. More engagement is planned over the summer.

Q. C. Nash – How much work is being done with local councils to address reliability issues? Congestion is a big issue, especially in Sheffield.

ACTION: C. Payne to take this question away and ensure it is included in Q & A's as part of the public engagement process.

Q. N. Spetch – Is the major objective to encourage people to use the bus instead of the car? It is flawed to use existing usage patterns as the basis for any demand estimation as usage of buses is determined by the availability of services. What is needed is a thorough assessment of latent demand (i.e. where no/insufficient services exist).

A. We know that usage is in decline (nationally as well as locally) and modelling is being used to look at capacity.

Q. F. Postlethwaite – How have the decisions regarding the 30 bus routes been determined? There's a need for local routes which currently consist of a trip into the city/town centre followed by a change onto another service to the destination to become one journey. We want to ensure engagement is not just a tick box exercise and that there is power in what the public say.

A. We need to manage expectations. Between 2027 and 2029 there will be very little change to the current network except for some improvement on routes to hospitals and minor changes to address reliability and punctuality. Post-2029 there will be the opportunity for route/network redesign.

H. Roberts advised that the Transport Policy team is looking at possibilities for future the network. Looking at the bigger picture, linking to active travel and moving behaviours to make public transport more sustainable.

J. Brightmore stated he agrees that more cooperation with neighbouring counties to connect services is needed and stressed that we do not want to reduce frequencies of services or make journey times longer.

Q. Cllr J. Morton – If people aren't using services now because they are unreliable or don't run at the right time, how are you going to get them to use services in future?

A. Good question! It will take time to improve and for us to be in a position to encourage people to use buses again.

Q. B. Riley – I'm worried about the phrase active travel. |Does this mean that people will have to walk further to access bus services? We also need more seats and better lighting in bus shelters

A. No, people won't have further to walk. It's about providing the infrastructure/facilities to allow people to walk or cycle part of their journey if they wish and ensure an integrated transport system.

ACTION: R. Cowling to arrange for a technical person from the franchising team to attend a future meeting to update the group and answer any questions.

SYMCA fare freeze and cut

R. Cowling advised the group of the SYMCA fare freeze on child concessionary fare (£1) and Supertram fares (tram only), along with the Adult Long Distance Supertram single fare reduction from £3.40 to £3 in line with the national bus fare cap. Details are available on the [TSY website](#).

5. Fare changes

R. Cowling advised the group that commercial operators First Bus, Stagecoach and TravelMaster increased their fares from 4 January. Details are available on operator websites and on the [TSY website](#).

6. Operator general items of note or updates

Tram:

- Long distance single reduced to £3.
- Renewal works will be taking place in February and then over the Easter holidays and through the summer. Keep an eye on the [Supertram Travel Alerts webpage](#) for details.
- Driver shortages through sickness and retirement have resulted in short notice cancellations. Rostas have been changed to address this and driver training for new drivers is underway. This has also affected conductors and has resulted in trams running on rare occasions without conductors onboard.
- To help with reliability, tram frequency has been reduced to 15 mins on a temporary basis.

Q. F. Postlethwaite – I've heard that there is some unhappiness among Supertram staff, are industrial relations positive?

A. N. Wragg – Shift working, particularly at night doesn't suit everyone. |We have good relations and engagement with staff and unions and have reduced weekly hours to help with duties and rotas.

Train:

Northern – No representative from Northern present to provide an update.

CrossCountry – No representative from XC present to provide an update.

East Midlands Railway –G. Selby shared slides and updated the group on the new Aurora Class 810's. Two were introduced into service in December 2025 and a further roll out is planned this year with 33 new trains being introduced to provide more capacity, including luggage space and Wi-Fi.

Timetable changes were also introduced on 14 December with additional capacity on journeys and some refurbishments of 170's and 158's.

Q. B. Riley – Is it advertised on timetables when additional carriages are provided? There are often issues with overcrowding and being unable to get a seat.

A. G. Selby – It is advertised at stations and additional carriages are generally prioritised at AM and PM peak times. The new fleet will help address some of the overcrowding.

ACTION: G. Selby to investigate and feedback whether details regarding additional carriages can be included on timetables.

N. Spetch – Information is available online on the day if you know where to look" (realtime trains.co.uk) (i.e. not from EMR themselves as far as I know).

G. Selby also advised that there is a new assisted travel lounge next to the ticket office at Sheffield station. It's a calming place to wait for those who have requested assistance so staff can find them easily

Q. F. Postlethwaite – Will the Barnsley – London service be brought back?

A. G. Selby – EMR is contracted to run Sheffield – London. We are looking at how we can grow the network. There is nothing official but there is a workstream looking at how we can best serve customers and Barnsley is one of those routes.

Bus:

Stagecoach – G. Roome advised that day ticket and Flexi5 ticket prices are frozen. Some fares have increased to help meet rising fuel and maintenance costs and allow us to continue investing in our people, our technology, and the service you receive. Staffing is in good condition across stations.

N. Spetch – Back of a fag packet calculation – 150% fare increase since 1990 but appreciates operational costs and environmental impacts.

C. Nash offered his thanks for service 88 on Ecclesall Road.

First – no representative in attendance to provide update.

7. Capital Investment projects

R. Cowling provided an update on the following:

Magna Tram Train station and P & R - Transforming Cities Fund (TCF)

Works are progressing well and Tram Train services now running again on Saturday evenings. The station is expected to open in late spring.

Bus Lane Review public consultation - City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)

A public consultation launched on Wednesday 10 December which closes on Wednesday 21 January on proposals to ease congestion and improve bus journey times at six key locations in Rotherham and Sheffield. Feedback will be used to support an Outline Business Case (OBC) to be submitted to SYMCA Board in early 2026.

8. Members items

Nothing raised

9. Any other business

The group asked if someone could attend a future meeting to discuss what is being done to improve bus priority measures across South Yorkshire.

ACTION: R. Cowling to ask LA transport teams to attend the next meeting to discuss their plans.

10. Dates of future meetings

- Thursday 16 April 2026, 10.30am
- Thursday 16 July 2026, 10.30am
- Thursday 15 October 2026, 10.30am – virtual pending meeting room availability