

SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

THURSDAY 18 JULY 2019

PRESENT: J. Hoare (Chair), N. Spetch (Vice Chair/Rotherham TUG), J. Brightmore, I. Jenkinson (Sheffield TUG), D. Leech (Cllr, Barnsley), M. Payling (Chair of DTUG), M. Wilson, J. Whittington (Barnsley TUG), D. Wrottesley ((Hope Valley Rail User Group).

GUESTS: Eve Hood (First), R. Cowling (SYPTTE), A. Forrest (SCR), P. Hopkinson (First), R. Isaac (Northern), F. Johnson (Stagecoach), K. Lowe (First), M. Lynam (SCR), P. Turner (SYPTTE), A. Wright (SYPTTE).

APOLOGIES: A. Bray, M. Farmer (SYPTTE), T. Taylor (SYPTTE), N Wragg (Supertram), L Eades (Supertram).

1. OPEN AND WELCOME

The meeting was opened by the Chair, and introductions took place around the table.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from A. Bray and T. Taylor, N Wragg, L Eades.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

D. Wrottesley asked for a correction in the minutes from last meeting, to show him as not present.

N. Spetch noted that re Item 4, rail changes are now on the TSY website but in future these ought to be shown earlier. A. Wright said future rail changes would appear online in a timely manner when available.

Also re Item 4, N. Spetch felt the post-meeting note did not fully address issues re ticket machines at stations, and that policies surrounding on-board ticket purchase in the event of non-operational ticket machines need to be more fully understood by customers and staff. R. Isaac said he would raise this within Northern. He also offered a station visit to look at signage: Chair said that N. Spetch should arrange with R. Isaac outside the meeting.

The minutes were then agreed.

4. FORWARD PLANNER

In the absence of M. Farmer, M. Lynam gave information on three key issues:

1. Sheffield City Region Transport Strategy.

The new SCR Transport Strategy was issued in January of this year and aligns with the SCR Mayor's Vision and Transport for the North (TfN)'s Transport Strategy. It sets out policies, goals and aspirations rather than methodologies; these will be developed in the next six months. Plans will focus on four strands – Road, Rail, Active Travel and Bus – with crosscutting priorities including Air Quality. Rail will be the first to be addressed due to the fixed nature of infrastructure, followed by road, bus and lastly active travel.

The Strategy covers a ten-year period and over the next year will split activity into items which are already funded, at business case level, and those to enter feasibility studies (the latter to include Askern Station).

The Rail Plan is out now and meets Central Government objectives and local employment objectives.

The Bus Plan will examine both current work and Clive Betts' independent review for the Mayor, and a draft version should be ready by the end of the current year. The link to take part in the consultation is <https://sheffieldcityregion.org.uk/?s=bus+review>. Members commented that those without internet access are not aware of the review and are less able to get involved in the consultation.

The Active Travel Plan will incorporate work being done by the Mayor's Active Travel Commissioner Sarah Storey and will look at the case for a comprehensive cycling and walking network similar to Manchester's.

2. HS2

Work to deliver HS2 is proceeding on the assumption of the current alignment. Although the Rail Plan sets out Sheffield's preference for a Parkway Station it acknowledges the stronger case which can be built for a new station on the Dearne Valley Loop, possibly at Goldthorpe and SCR continues to work with HS2, especially regarding the effects on communities in Rotherham and Doncaster.

Capacity at Midland Station could prove challenging with the introduction of new HS2 services, due to its location and the Listed status of the frontage prohibiting introduction of additional lines. One solution under consideration is the migration of local journeys to a tram-train operation extended through to Doncaster, however this would bring its own need for engineering and planning solutions.

The meeting expressed concerns as to how this would work on several points, including

- a. how it may be affected should SCC move the tram track away from the station
- b. differing layouts and regulations on tram and train (e.g. impact of passengers carrying luggage, carriage of non-folding cycles, toilet provision for example)

- c. Difficulties re interchange, given that Doncaster is already a major interchange station on the network.

J. Brightmore said that he thought the loss of the Woodhead Line had a major negative impact. The meeting discussed the relative merits of high speed, reliability and comfort, and the possible benefits of a Trans-Pennine link offering speedier connections Sheffield to Leeds rather than to London.

A. Forrest said that another consideration was the possibility of reopening old lines in some areas. He said he would bring further detail to the next meeting. A second line at Totley is now going through the approvals process: Any rail project has long timescales due to planning approval and physical build times.

Members raised the issue of a station at Askern, and A. Forrest said the community group there was involved in discussions, as were operators, but it was as yet unclear whether a business case would be viable.

3. Transforming Cities

SCC is currently putting together a bid for the Government's Transforming Cities fund to enhance internal connectivity. A draft business case was drawn up in June, which would link into HS2 development. A final bid needs to be submitted by November, with the assumption that results would be known early in the New Year.

M. Lyman emphasized that moving the tram line to the front of Midland Station is only a possibility in early stages of SCC's plans for the City. They are leading on it but are working closely with SCR and SYPTE.

Proposals for plans for links to Doncaster Airport include rail and A. Forrest added that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options are being considered for Barnsley/Doncaster links and a business case is currently being drawn up for an A635 road scheme. M. Lynam highlighted the wider South Yorkshire benefits from extending links into Sheffield.

[At this point M. Lynam needed to leave for another meeting]

5. BUS

A. Wright spoke briefly about the upcoming September changes to the network. He highlighted that neither commercial operators nor SYPTE wanted to see network reductions but that these changes were driven by multiple factors including reduced patronage, reduced footfall, congestion, and increased operational costs. The network as a whole needs to be affordable and sustainable.

Impacts have been felt on commercial and tendered services. Most of the commercial changes will be in Sheffield (First) with the remaining ones principally in Doncaster (First) and Barnsley (Stagecoach). Some communities will get a reduction in frequency: outside of Sheffield, most of the changes are a realignment rather than a reduction of reach.

Changes to tendered services come following the expiry of a significant number of existing contracts at a cost of about £4m. These were a combination of network and statutory school

services and presented challenges on costs, when following tender submissions, it became obvious that these contracts could not be replaced on a 1:1 basis.

SYPTE works with operators before service changes are made to allow them to review the impact of the proposed changes. Where these changes would result in a loss of services to some areas, SYPTE seeks to retain a level of service through tendering. SYPTE's funding is guided by a Tendered Services Criteria model (TSCM) that considers the availability of alternative commercial services (accessibility) and affordability (cost per passenger). In some cases SYPTE has withdrawn some tendered services, where commercial alternatives exist. This enables funding to be reallocated to cover gaps in the network where there is no commercial provision.

The members then followed with questions and answers around specific services. Full information is going out to councilors and stakeholders this week, with full details appearing on the TSY website on Monday. New timetables will be available via the website approximately three weeks before service changes take place.

F. Johnson said that investments have been made in new fleet locally, including new Euro 6 vehicles into the Holbrook depot. He said that Stagecoach are also extending their '5 people for £5' weekend travel offer over the school holidays and are also introducing a Hope Valley Explorer ticket.

Discussion took place about the merits and otherwise of cross-town services, short running services and adding in extra vehicles to bolster services. It was explained that extra vehicles will not generally deliver increased patronage to offset increased costs, and that in heavy traffic the introduction of extra vehicles has proved to increase bunching rather than maintain frequency. Modern tracking systems mean that operators can pick up on problem areas remotely and to address specific cases but not the overall causes which are part of a bigger picture. Clive Betts' review should address congestion and other factors and may highlight opportunities and challenges.

A. Wright informed the meeting about the Sheffield and Rotherham consultations on clean air; the Sheffield plans will have a potential effect on buses. He added that SYPTE has been working with the operators to mitigate the effects should the council decide to introduce charging for buses to drive into the City Centre.

Some members felt that charging buses rather than private cars was a negative message for the council to be putting out. I Jenkinson asked the Chair to contact the council to put forward a comment on behalf of the group. A.Wright said the Chair would be able to do this through SCC's consultation portal, and asked R. Cowling to supply Chair with the link to do so. Members can also respond as individuals.

Action: J Hoare to SCC to express concern at negative message of not charging cars to enter city centre.

[At this point A. Wright had to leave for another meeting]

6. TRAM

No updates

7. TRAIN

R. Issacs gave an update on the fleet:

- The first of the new '331' units entered service on the Doncaster – Leeds route earlier this month.
- Of the 101 new trains on order, nine are now in service. The rest were held up by design issues but are now in testing.
- The first Pacers should be retiring in July/August. The working aim is to have all retired by the year end. However, should it be necessary to retain any temporarily to maintain service levels beyond this date then this will be kept as an option. Final announcements on the replacement schedule will be made by government.
- New units will comprise electric, diesel and hybrid vehicles and R. Issacs said that in his experience they offer a great travel experience.
- In response to questions from the group as to whether there were more vehicles in the fleet than when Northern took over operation, whether the trains used locally would be 2, 3 or 4 carriages, or whether the new 195 diesels would be on the Nottingham/Leeds line or the Lincoln/Leeds line, R. Issac said he would get that information for the next meeting.

The meeting thanked R. Issac for his update and welcomed the new vehicles but said that doubtless some enthusiasts would mourn the passing of the Pacers.

In response to a question as to whether the Northern strike had been called off, R. Issac said that talks were ongoing.

8. MEMBERS' ITEMS

N. Spetch gave a summary of the presentation by Mayor Dan Jarvis which he had attended. He commended the appointment of Dame Sarah Storey as Active Travel Commissioner, but said he felt disappointed at the lack of emphasis placed on the 'first and last mile' of any journey. He feels more consideration should be given to those who might wish to cycle at either end of a public transport journey but do not have the opportunity to travel with their own bike, leaving only the options of owning two bikes or using a hire bike at one end. A. Forrest commented that he understood the frustration but observed that folding bikes can usually be carried as hand luggage. N. Spetch said that again raised the issue of inadequate luggage space on trains.

N. Spetch said he was pleased to see a preference in the Mayor's speech for off-road cycle paths, holistic ways to integrate active travel, and safe walking and cycling routes. He added that he was however sorry to observe the TfN chair still talking about a cross-Pennine road tunnel and that the focus needs to be moved away from the car.

A. Forrest clarified that the Implementation Plan for Active Travel includes a section on the 'first and last mile'.

R. Issacs gave an update on community rail activities:

- He thanked SYPTE's rail team, in particular Cathrine Ashworth, for their liaison work on the Darnall Station cleanup. This was well supported by both South

Yorkshire Police and young people's charity Endeavour. SYP managed to recover a hidden knife, and the whole was a positive learning experience for participants, which R. Issacs has shared in a write-up to the DfT.

- He thanked the Friends of Dore & Totley Station for their push to obtain a station canopy; their efforts were successful, and the new station canopy was due to be unveiled on 19 July.
- Doncaster 'Herstory' is a local initiative where Northern have worked with DMBC to connect young mothers and unemployed young women to a project focusing on women's history, suffragette stories and female empowerment and connecting to careers. Thanks go out to DMBC for funding childcare, and to Arriva for helping the group go to London and speak to DfT. The participants are now linked into employment entry channels at Northern.
- Every year, Northern do a film about their activities: this year's will be focused on South Yorkshire, and will cover Grindleford, Dore & Totley, and an anti-vandal project at Fitzwilliam which Northern hope to roll out with SYPTTE's help at South Yorkshire stations.
- He added that they have achieved a lot working with SYPTTE's Train Team and will be looking to do work in the future aligned to Pride.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other matters

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17 October 2019