

## SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

Wednesday 20 October 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)
F. Postlethwaite	(BTUG member)
G. Arthur	(BTUG member)
J. Brightmore	(STUG member)
D. Leech	(BTUG meeting)

### GUESTS:

R. Cowling	(SYPTTE)
A. Wright	(SYPTTE)
C. Sadler	(SYPTTE)
M. Farmer	(SYPTTE)
N. Wragg	(Supertram)
J. Young	(Stagecoach)
D. Fletcher	(First)
A. Bray	(CrossCountry)
M. Coney	

### 1. OPEN AND WELCOME

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

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

R. Isaac (Northern).

### 3. ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP

AW provided a summary of the current situation on bus recovery and the Bus Strategy, advising the group of the need for a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). AW reminded the group of the MCA's intention to establish an Enhanced Partnership.

AW said that given the BSIP is due on 31 October, there is little time for consultation. The BSIP will lead to an Enhanced Partnership from April 2022.

AW told the group that bus patronage remains below pre-COVID levels. Members were reminded of funding streams throughout the pandemic, including the CBSSG.

Q: JB asked “We’ve had an enhanced partnership since 2012. What improvements will this one bring that we don’t already have?”

A: AW said the statutory enhanced partnership is a more regulated regime with a joint commitment to deliver on a statutory basis, as opposed to the previous voluntary partnership. AW said we need to move forward working with operators and the users, and even with franchising buses remain commercial with the need to make a profit to reinvest into the bus services.

Q: FP said the Enhanced Partnership means we continue to have no significant control over routes. Franchising continues to give operators a profit, albeit smaller, but gives more control and allows more money to be reinvested into services. It’s interesting to hear authorities are meeting fortnightly with operators but there is still yet no consultation with users. Drivers are leaving the industry because they’re fed up with the conditions.

Q: DW said we know punctuality statistics are available, but these aren’t published, so people can’t see how operators are reaching their targets. DW added that the alterations in Sheffield city centre have improved punctuality of affected services, but would be keen to know what their target is and if there is any way it can be improved?

Q: NS said we should be talking about better transport, not just better buses.

Q: JB would like to see more routes linking Sheffield station and the city centre and be better co-ordination between buses and trains.

A: AW acknowledged that Sheffield station isn’t ideally placed and not currently directly connected to buses of any kind. Due to the busy road between the railway and bus station, there is a need for improved wayfinding information at the station.

Q: DW would like to see reinstatement of contracted services withdrawn due to lack of funding as soon as conditions allow.

A: AW said lots of work had been undertaken to explore how connectivity between bus and rail services could be improved.

Q: DW expressed concern at the level of bus service punctuality and asked how this was measured.

A: AW said there is a statutory window by which buses arrive on time between one minute early and five minutes late. The target is 95% of

buses arriving within this timeframe. SYPTE and operators spend a lot of time monitoring services and reporting on punctuality

Q: DW asked if it was true that punctuality improved as a result of the rerouting of the 52 and 95 as part of pedestrianisation in Sheffield?

A: JY said that this information is not held because punctuality is measured along the route. In the early stages of the pandemic, punctuality was the best it has ever been as roads were empty. Re-routing in the city centre added mileage, but extra time wasn't needed to allow for this as there were low traffic levels.

Q: DL asked bus operators what they were doing to promote and recruit bus drivers in the area as a result of the ongoing driver shortages

A: AW said we've been working closely with operators to understand their individual situations, and timetable changes are going to be rolled out to improve confidence in services by limiting the number of short-notice cancellations.

JY said Stagecoach is experiencing a driver shortage that was unforeseen. The issue is national and there are a number of reasons for it. Concerns have been raised alongside other operators through the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) to the government. Stagecoach has a healthy number of recruits and a resource plan in place. Failing journeys because of a lack of drivers is extremely rare, but recently has accounted for a loss of 4% of journeys.

JY said the delivery model is almost irrelevant as bus companies have virtually made no profit in the last 18 months. He added that fixing congestion, more bus priority and increasing average operating speed would bring greater improvements. Buses are key to help drive a city region's success.

Q: JH said Stagecoach East Midlands reduced his local bus service to respond to the driver shortage. However, has failed to maintain this timetable.

Q: FP said that neither operator apps nor stop PIDs have been updated with short-notice cancellations. FP said bus operators are fundamentally working for their shareholders and this doesn't help.

A: JY expressed disappointment in relation to JH's experience, but said this was why services were changing at the end of the month.

Q: NS said that no information is better than incomplete information and said that reliability of passenger information needs to be improved.

A: JY is aware of some glitches with real-time information, but this is being investigated. Social media is being updated with the latest information on services.

Q: JB asked why bus diversions are not consistent across operators when bus services are affected by local authority road closures. Can there be better liaison between operators, the council and the PTE for better diversion information?

A: JY said Stagecoach tries very hard to stick to the route suggested on diversions, but sometimes there are issues which mean using alternative routes is inevitable. We give drivers discretion to do the right thing and advise drivers to serve all stops along the route.

#### **4. UPDATE FROM OPERATORS**

##### **Tram**

NW had to leave the meeting before he could give an update.

##### **Train**

AB had to leave the meeting before he could give an update, however DW provided an update for his previous action that this plan has been abandoned. Apologies were received from Northern.

#### **5. MEMBERS ITEMS/RAISED BY OTHER USER GROUPS**

BTUG:

- *Passenger involvement in consultation on the future of regional bus services and on the planned Enhanced Partnership*

FP said neighbouring Transport Authorities had set up platforms for the public to be consulted on their BSIPs and it wasn't right that those in South Yorkshire weren't being consulted. This needs to be expedited.

AW advised he would be speaking to Chloe Shepherd, SYMCA, in relation to consultation on the BSIP.

- *Possible return of FreeBee bus in Sheffield*

GA advised that a free bus service for Sheffield has overwhelming support and the reintroduction of one would encourage more people to use public transport and leave the car at home.

AW advised the service was cut as a result of budget reductions. SYMCA is currently bidding for the DfT's ZEBRA fund which supports the rollout of electric vehicles. There are a number of schemes across the region being considered, which include a shuttle bus similar to the FreeBee. However, at this time, there isn't a readily available route for a shuttle bus service, but discussions are ongoing.

JH advised that Manchester has three free bus services. JB advised that West Yorkshire has free shuttle bus services in Wakefield and Huddersfield.

The group asked SYMCA to seriously explore options for the provision of a FreeBee bus service around Sheffield, particularly towards the rail station.

- *Travel to Manchester by both road and rail*  
MF advised the group of plans for the transpennine route and provided an update on the transpennine upgrade works that are taking place and affecting services.

## 6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The possibility of the next meeting being face to face was raised.

## 7. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 19 January 2022, 10.30am

Wednesday 20 April 2022, 10.30am

Wednesday 20 July 2022, 10.30am

Wednesday 19 October 2022, 10.30am