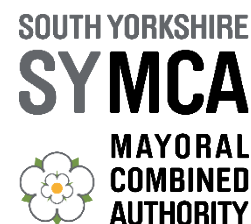


# South Yorkshire Transport User Group

## Minutes

16 January 2025



### Present:

I. Jenkinson	Chair
J. Brightmore	Member of the public
B. Riley	Member of the public
Cllr J. Morton	Parish councillor
N. Spetch	Vice Chair
G. Arthur	Barnsley TUG
Cllr. F Jackson	Member of the public

### Guests:

J. Young	Stagecoach
L. Pickford	Stagecoach
N. Wragg	Supertram
A. Bray	Cross Country Trains
L. Etheridge	EMR
R. Isaac	Northern
R. Cowling	SYMCA
V. Greenwood	SYMCA
H. Roberts	SYMCA
J. Martin	SYMCA
M. Muntus	SYMCA
K. Wright	SYMCA

### 1. Open and welcome

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

### 2. Apologies for absence

C. Khan, S. Bennett, Cllr B. Miskell, D. Allsopp, F. Postlethwaite, I. McHue

### 3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October were accepted as a true record.

No matters arising.

#### **4. Transport integration**

- **Franchising**

R. Cowling advised that the 12-week public consultation closed at 23:59 on Wednesday 15 January with over 7,500 responses received. The majority of which were in support of the proposals.

Q. Will comments and suggestions, submitted as part of the consultation feedback, regarding how people want franchising to look and work be considered and how will they be taken forward?

A. All feedback will be recorded, analysed and taken into consideration before a decision is made on whether to proceed with franchising or not.

- **Active travel**

V. Greenwood updated the group on the Year of Active Travel activities for 2024 and advised that the end of 2024 campaign was celebrated with a press release and webpage – [www.southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/explore/active-travel](http://www.southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/explore/active-travel)

Focus going forward will be holistic, encourage a more active lifestyle and tackle social isolation. SYMCA will work closely with the local authorities for financial and strategic support.

N. Spetch stated that more needs doing to improve footpaths, remove leaves, repair potholes etc. to help achieve objectives. For transport to be fully integrated, provision for bikes on buses and trams and better facilities on trains are required.

V. Greenwood advised that highway maintenance is the remit of the local authorities. We are already improving bike storage facilities near points of interchange and looking into the possibilities of allowing bikes on trams. These are long term aspirations as current infrastructure and tram vehicle layouts are not suitable for bike carriage due to the limited level access sections onboard.

#### **5. Enhanced Partnership fare cap campaign**

J. Martin presented to the group highlighting the EP fare cap campaign. SYMCA has worked with operators, local authorities and TravelMaster to help to inform passengers that the new £3 adult single is a maximum fare cap rather than a flat fare, and guide them towards alternative value-for-money tickets.

The campaign is intended to promote South Yorkshire's bus network and support patronage growth and aims to inform passengers that:

- Daily and weekly tickets offer the best value.
- The TSY ticket finder is available to help get the best value fare - passengers should not pay more to travel than is necessary.
- The £3 fare cap has replaced the £2 cap, this offer is not a flat fare, but the maximum that can be charged for a single journey.

G. Arthur stated he is pleased the £3 fare cap is being explained but it's a shame the £2 fare cap could not be maintained. He asked whether pressure could be put on central government by SYMCA and other Combined Authorities to reduce the fare cap.

J. Morton asked what denotes how much fare to pay and I. Jenkinson asked if fare tables are still publicly available?

J. Young advised fare tables are no longer published. Information is stored on the ticket machines. Drivers will be able to advise the correct fare if passengers state their destination when boarding. Operating costs have risen considerably and as commercial operators they need to cover costs as well as offer best value. Operators are working to encourage weekly and monthly ticket purchases.

Bus journey speeds have reduced with buses often running at walking speed, which increases operating costs. Changes need to be made to reduce car use and increase bus priority measures to speed up journey times.

## **6. Year of Active Travel**

Covered in item 4 above

## **7. Operator general items of note or updates**

### **Tram:**

N. Wragg advised the group it has been a challenging time due to the weather recently. Tram Train services have been affected by floods at Rotherham station. Sub-zero temperatures have also caused some rail breaks which have impacted services. Repair works are ongoing.

Fare changes were introduced on 1 January.

### **Train:**

Northern – R. Isaac reported performance figures and advised bad weather and high sickness rates have caused service issues. Northern's ambition is to achieve 90% of journeys on time, and 2% cancellations.

The 27 September 2025 marks the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. [Railway 200](#) celebrates the past present and future of rail.

Northern has five biodiversity stations.

East Midlands Railway – L. Etheridge reported performance figures and advised about four trains between London and Sheffield with journey time improvements of 27 minutes on a Sunday.

More seat availability on Saturday and Sunday between Liverpool and Norwich.

New trains being introduced, and fleet refurbishment works – timescale awaited.

M. Muntus advised about a redirected train due to signal blockage whereby passengers had to disembark at Dronfield with no way of getting to Sheffield. He asked why passengers weren't taken to further up Hope Valley where they could connect with other trains.

L. Etheridge asked for some specific details so she can investigate and will contact M. Muntus separately.

CrossCountry - A. Bray advised the group that CrossCountry had a better Christmas period than expected but bad weather still impacted some journeys. More improvements are expected as drivers complete their route training.

Nine Avanti Voyagers are being introduced in May, spread across the networks including South Yorkshire. Fleet refurbishments will also start soon. A new Managing Director will be starting in March.

#### **Bus:**

Stagecoach – J. Young advised that their network is stable following changes introduced last September, including the extension of service 52 to Hillsborough and frequency improvements on service 88. Service 221 – Rotherham - Doncaster is now every 20 minutes and evening and weekend journeys have improved.

Minor changes are planned in April to address punctuality concerns.

Reliability is at 99% with services operating, even if they are late.

Drivers – 33 over strength to give resilience and allow the operator to react accordingly. Vehicles are also more reliable.

Fare changes were introduced from 1 January with some tickets removed to simplify the range.

Electric vehicles are smooth, quiet and warm and are proving popular with customers. 30% of the fleet is electric.

It's too early to say whether the new £3 fare cap has impacted on patronage.

## **8. Capital investment projects**

R. Cowling provided an update on the following:

### **Parkgate P & R – Transforming Cities Fund (TCF)**

- Planned P & R opening for late Oct/early Nov. 2024 has been delayed due to issues with Northern Power Grid connections – Link road opened late 2024.
- Parkgate Link Road and Park & Ride schemes aim to ease congestion and improve air quality on the A633 corridor between Rotherham Town Centre and the Dearne Valley. They are hoped to encourage greener travel and improve connectivity, and traffic flow.
- P & R located close to Parkgate retail park and Tram Stop consists of 284 spaces - (8 of which are for motorcycles, with 14 electrical vehicle charging points).

## **Magna Tram Train station and P & R (TCF)**

- Works expected to start February 2025 – there will be an impact on Tram Train services on Saturday evenings from 29 March to winter 2025 to allow works to take place.
- The station and P & R will be fully accessible, the station will consist of two new platforms connected by an overbridge, lifts and steps.
- The 100-space P&R will be constructed within the existing Magna car park, will include EV charging points and will be free to park at in line with other SYMCA-operated park & ride sites.
- Providing new travel opportunities for people living or working in the Templeborough area, contributing to reducing congestion and harmful emissions on the busy Sheffield Road corridor.
- Expected completion late 2025.

### **9. Members items**

An item was raised by N. Spetch regarding road closures and the impact on bus services, asking what can be done to improve the timeliness and (importantly) accuracy of at-stop information and to improve travel options for local residents etc.

N. Spetch provided an example of when an area was left without a bus service due to work.

A discussion was held around the process followed to notify of road closures. SYMCA provides operators with weekly updates for the four districts, along with suggested diversion routes and a plan is put in place. Emergency works cannot be planned for. Regrettably, works are not always carried out as per the notified plan.

It was accepted improvements need to be made and all parties are working on this.

### **10. Any other business**

G Arthur raised concerns over a failure to provide updated timetables at bus stops. Printed up to date timetables should be visible at all bus stops. There are cases where carousels are damaged or missing which can result in missing information. Any issues relating to missing or incorrect timetable information at stops should be reported to Traveline on 0800 952 0002 so action can be taken to rectify any incorrect information.

G. Arthur also asked why Barnsley doesn't have many electronic displays at stops.

M. Muntus advised that units are distributed in accordance with population. Units are expensive but as we move towards public ownership things may change.

### **10. Date of next meetings:**

Thursday 17 April 2025, 10.30am

Thursday 17 July 2025, 10.30am – virtual meeting pending meeting room availability

Thursday 16 October 2025, 10.30am - virtual meeting pending meeting room availability