

MCA - ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2023 AT 2.00 PM

SOUTH YORKSHIRE MCA, 11 BROAD STREET WEST,
SHEFFIELD, S1 2BQ



PRESENT:

Mayor Oliver Coppard (Chair)	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
Councillor Chris Read	Rotherham MBC
Dawn Badminton-Capps	Public Bus Users
Ian Humphreys	First Yorkshire
Matt Kitchin	Stagecoach Yorkshire
Andrew McGuinness	CPT
Pat Beijer	SYMCA Executive Team
John Dowie	SYMCA Executive Team

IN ATTENDANCE:

Nick Brown	Bus Partnerships Project Director	SYMCA Executive Team
Jordan Kemp	Marketing Manager	SYMCA Executive Team
Tim Taylor	Director of Public Transport Operations	SYMCA Executive Team
Ellen Hinsley	Minute Taker	

APOLOGIES:

No apologies had been received.

35 **Chair's Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

36 **Minutes & Actions of the Previous Meeting**

It was noted that a duplicated action had been removed from the minutes.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November be approved as amended.

37 Operational Group Update

37a Mayor's £2 Fare Cap

The Board considered an update on the Mayor's £2 Fare Cap which had run between November and December 2022.

The scheme had been intended to promote public transport while also providing support during the cost of living crisis. The £2 Fare had exceeded expectations, with take up exceeding initial forecasts. The scheme had transitioned to a nationally funded scheme on 1 January 2023 which would continue until the end of March. Although the scheme had been a win for cost of living, it was not yet clear whether there had been an increase in overall patronage.

It was observed that a greater proportion of those using the scheme lived in the lower quartile of deprived wards (using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scale) in South Yorkshire, indicating that it was benefitting those who needed it the most.

In response to questions, the Director of Public Transport Operations advised that it could be worth comparing the distribution of passengers before and after the fare cap. He also observed that, in terms of growing the market, it would be most useful to understand the impact of any initiatives on people who had previously chosen not to use public transport where they had the option to do so. It also raised the issue of whether a targeted intervention in deprived communities would be appropriate.

Operators also informed the Board that within deprived areas, some frequent passengers were choosing the single fare over the better value weekly ticket. Consideration was being given to options such as paying by instalments which would enable these people to access the best value tickets.

The Board considered that the "Mayor's Fare" had been well publicised and received positively by the public and the media. In addition to making public transport cheaper for passengers, the scheme had removed confusion around ticket types.

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place observed that prior to the Covid pandemic there had been a focus on offering better value period tickets to persuade passengers to commit to public transport for a week, month or even year. Following the pandemic, period tickets offered less value for money for many passengers who now worked partly at home.

ACTION: The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place and operators to explore cheaper single and return fares to promote bus travel with infrequent users and to consider the possibility of targeting specific groups of actual and/or potential passengers.

It was noted that the MCA had committed to support the network until July 2023, but the national fare cap was due to end after March. Therefore, it was imperative to agree an exit strategy to avoid passengers reverting to paying the

original full fares in April, and on which the Enhanced Partnership (EP) could continue to build.

ACTION: Operators to identify several areas (deprived, rural, etc) where trials could be conducted on reduced, simplified fares and targeted support, working with the Bus Partnerships Project Director.

RESOLVED that the update on the Mayor's £2 Fare Cap be noted.

37b **Update on Punctuality & Comparison with 2019**

The Director of Public Transport Operations introduced an item on punctuality and a number of planned initiatives to drive improvements.

The proposed improvements were centred around 3 key themes:

- Timetabling – assessing operators' current approach to scheduling and whether making use of available technology could stimulate improvement;
- Bus priority – reviewing measures in place such as bus lanes and giving consideration to extending the network, widening their operating hours and ensuring that they are enforced.
- Boarding times – encouraging passengers to buy tickets ahead of journeys and considering the removal of bus stops where they are minimally used or closely grouped.

The Mayor noted his thanks to First for their investment in introducing 'tap and cap' in the region.

The First Representative confirmed that work with a technology provider (Prospective) on schedule optimisation was underway and progressing well. The Stagecoach Representative confirmed that he would be interested in learning more and potentially participating in a similar programme. The Director of Public Transport Operations confirmed that it may be possible for the MCA to provide financial assistance to any smaller operators also wanting to participate.

(The Bus Users Representative left the meeting.)

ACTION: The First Representative to provide an update on their work with Prospective at the next meeting.

ACTION: The Bus Partnerships Project Director to provide an update on the bus priority programme across the 4 districts to the March meeting.

ACTION: Bus operators to contribute items on progress or actions underway at future meetings.

RESOLVED that Members confirm their support for the proposed improvement activities.

38 Development Group Update

38a Implement Consistent Use of 'South Yorkshire' Brand Across the Network

Members received an item on the need to implement a South Yorkshire brand across the network.

The Marketing Manager outlined 3 options and the associated risks and rewards of each:

- Keep the current Travel South Yorkshire (TSY) brand;
- Keep and evolve the current TSY brand;
- Replace TSY with a new brand.

It was noted that the EP Development Group had recommended evolving the TSY brand.

The Director of Public Transport Operations advised that it would be important to align any change in branding with an updated service offer.

The Board discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the 3 options. It was acknowledged that other types of transport should be included in the discussion. There were also several uncertainties surrounding the future of public transport in the region. Bus franchising work was currently ongoing, and the tram was due to revert to MCA ownership in 2024. Given these uncertainties, it was felt that it would not be possible to make an informed decision at this stage.

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place observed that it would be worthwhile to start developing brand proposals for both incremental and radical change to ensure that branding was able to be in place without delay.

RESOLVED that a final decision on the future branding to be deferred, but that work should continue developing thinking.

38b Update on EP Programme Delivery

The Bus Partnerships Project Director presented an update on EP Programme Delivery.

Work was underway to improve the real time data available online and at bus stops. Not all buses were currently tracked, and the system did not always reflect when services had been cancelled.

In order to simplify ticketing, the project is assessing low volume products that might be removed, as well as financial modelling to identify where and how single operator products could be replaced by their multi-operator equivalent. In the medium to long term, the implementation of 'tap and cap' across the region would also provide further simplification.

It was essential that the network run as efficiently as possible with the limited resources available, and this would be assessed as part of the upcoming tender process.

There had been multiple instances of students arriving late for school and it was therefore proposed that operators agree to a 'schools promise' which would require school services to be prioritised and communication be improved with schools when problems arose.

ACTION: The Democratic Services Officer to add an item on Bus Priority to the agenda of the next meeting and invite relevant Officers from each local authority to attend this discussion.

RESOLVED that:

1. The contents of the paper be noted.
2. Additional ways that can be used to raise awareness with government of the imminent funding crisis, and its likely impact on the South Yorkshire bus network be considered.
3. A progress report on EP delivery for each EP workstream be received at each future EP Board meeting.

39 **Customer Forum Update**

39a **Customer Charter (Transport Promise) Update**

The Director of Public Transport Development presented an update on the progress of the Transport Promise.

A digital, interactive service experience map was being developed which would take passengers through what to expect at each step of the journey, including:

- Planning your travel
- At the bus stop
- On board the bus
- After your journey

Agencies were currently being engaged to develop and design the content and digital aspects of the Transport Promise.

Members were also asked to consider the implementation of a standard approach to complaints and the inclusion of a 'last bus promise' in the Customer Charter.

A final, draft version of the Customer Promise was intended to be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

Operators confirmed that they were happy to agree to a 'school promise' (above) and a 'last bus promise', observing that these issues were widely regarded as good practice. As an example, the Stagecoach Representative advised that they had a contract with a taxi company so that they could arrange for a taxi for any wheelchair user that could not be accommodated on board.

ACTION: The First Representative to explore the possibility of implementing a policy to provide onward travel for any wheelchair user who was unable to be accommodated on board in South Yorkshire.

RESOLVED that the Customer Charter (Transport Promise) Update be noted.

39b **EP Forum Members - Changes Proposed**

The Board considered some proposed changes to the EP Forum membership following ongoing efforts to identify individuals to join.

Although meetings to date had been valuable, it was felt that increased public representation would be beneficial, in particular:

- A Doncaster representative for Better Buses
- A Rotherham representative for Better Buses
- A Sheffield representative for Better Buses
- Change the current representative for Better Buses to represent Barnsley

It was also proposed to:

- Invite Medact as a health sector representative
- Invite Unite Community South Yorkshire to be a Trade Union representative

The Mayor advised that it may be more appropriate to approach the Trade Unions or the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) to identify a health sector representative.

ACTION: The Director of Public Transport Development to further consider how best to secure health service representation whether from a Trade Union or the ICP.

Members also discussed limiting the terms of membership to a year, after which it would be reviewed.

RESOLVED that the EP Board endorse:

1. The membership of Better Buses representatives for each district to the EP Forum, for a 12 month term.
2. Invite a contact for Unite Community South Yorkshire to be a Trade Union representative.

40 **Items of Confidentiality**

None.

41 **Any Other Business**

The CPT Representative informed the Board of initiatives in other areas which could potentially be considered in South Yorkshire such as free bus travel for children travelling with a paying adult.

He also noted his thanks to Sheffield City Council for their last minute support to coach operators regarding the implementation of the Clean Air Zone.

ACTION: The Democratic Services Officer to add an item on Coach to an agenda of a future meeting.

ACTION: The Marketing Manager to share a marketing plan with the Board prior to the next meeting.

I, the undersigned, confirm that this is a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Signed

Name

Position

Date