

ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 2.00 PM

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



Present:

Councillor Chris Read (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)	Rotherham MBC
Zoe Hands	First South Yorkshire
Matt Kitchin	Stagecoach Yorkshire
Andrew McGuinness	CPT
Lydia Horbury	Bus Users
Ross Hitchcock	TM Travel (and other small operators)

In Attendance:

Melanie Corcoran	Executive Director of Transport	SYMCA Executive Team
Steven Pleasant	Healthy Life Expectancy Lead	SYMCA Executive Team
Nick Brown	Bus Partnerships Project Director	SYMCA Executive Team
Tim Taylor	Director of Public Transport Operations	SYMCA Executive Team
Paul Castle	Environment and Transport Service Director	Barnsley MBC
Ellen Hinsley	Minute Taker	SYMCA Executive Team

Apologies:

Mayor Oliver Coppard	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
Pat Beijer	SYMCA Executive Team

83 Chair's Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, in particular the new Executive Director of Transport, Melanie Corcoran. Apologies were noted as above.

84 Minutes & actions of the previous meeting

The following updates were provided on open actions in the Action Log:

- Minute No. 79(iii) – The First and Stagecoach representatives confirmed that they were happy to produce punctuality data on their respective websites, which could then be linked to MCA and Travel South Yorkshire (TSY).

- Minute No. 78(ii) – The Director of Public Transport Operations advised that a report would be going to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14th March which considered the impact of the removal of the Zoom Beyond Pass as well as the ongoing impact of the £2 fare cap.

ACTION: The Director of Public Transport Operations to share the Overview & Scrutiny report with Enhanced Partnership (EP) Board Members once published.

- Minute No. 78(i) – The Bus Partnerships Project Director confirmed that the Bus Promise was now in the public domain as it had been published with the papers for the last meeting. As the Promise contained a mix of current and future expectations it had not yet been publicised while a communications and marketing approach was considered.
- Minute No. 77(i) – Insights from the Mayor’s public bus meetings had been collated and sent out to operators the previous week.

ACTION: Operators to identify any quick wins to resolve in the data from the Mayor’s public bus meetings. Any progress to be reported at the May meeting.

ACTION: The First representative to bring an update on the Use of Prospective Scheduling Software to the May meeting.

- Minute No. 50 – Work on the Terms of Reference (ToR) had been superseded by Government’s requirement to update the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The updated BSIP would feed into the ToR review.
- Minute No. 44(i) – The MCA had set up a Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) which was being used to run trials of Demand Responsive Transport in Doncaster and Rotherham. Progress would be reported to future meetings.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th December 2023 be approved.

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Enhanced Partnership Programme Delivery Update

An EP Programme Delivery Update was presented.

In January Government had announced that all Local Transport Authorities were required to submit updated BSIPs by 12th June in order to be eligible for future funding. The MCA had raised concerns as the pre-election period would fall during the proposed timeline, further shortening the time available to do the work but an extension was not expected.

Consideration had been given to making minor amendments to the current BSIP and submitting a similar document however, it was felt that this would be counterproductive as the original version had not been successful in securing BSIP funding. The intention was therefore to reallocate resources and use feedback from the original version to produce the best document possible by the deadline. It was emphasised that commitment from all parties would be key to its success.

Due to the tight timescales, a revised BSIP would need to be considered at the next EP Board meeting on 21st May. The MCA Board would then need to consider the BSIP for approval at its meeting on 11th June. It was noted that the work on the EP Plan and Scheme would be put on hold until after the work to update the BSIP had concluded.

Members agreed that the refreshed BSIP would provide an opportunity to reflect on what had been achieved so far as well as refining ambitions for the future. Operators also expressed the hope that the work would help to reset the public narrative around bus.

ACTION: The MCA and operators to share internal timelines of approval points to ensure no misalignment in the process.

The Chair cautioned that while it was important to be ambitious, it was also important to be realistic about what could be achieved.

Other items that were discussed included:

- Public consultation of the upcoming service changes had taken place ahead of implementation on 7th April.
- The offer from the First Representative at the previous meeting to potentially fund the creation of two posts was currently being explored.
- In terms of real time information, 93% of journeys were currently being tracked and the MCA had allocated funds to ensure that trackers are available on lease to smaller operators.
- A decision on whether the MCA's bid for funding for electric buses under the Zebra 2 programme was expected in March.

RESOLVED that the EP Board:

1. Notes the progress and outstanding issues across the Board's project deliverables and targets, as set out in the report.
2. Notes that we have been required by DfT to review the South Yorkshire Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) as a condition of receiving Phase 3 BSIP funding for 2024/25
3. Notes that we have sought some flexibility to this timeline with the Department for Transport (DfT), given the forthcoming local elections and the current franchising assessment.
4. Notes that further information will be provided at the Board meeting on the proposed process and timeline for the delivery of a revised BSIP.

EP Forum Update

A verbal update was provided on the EP Forum.

The Chair of the EP Forum raised the concern that although the Bus Promise was now available in the public domain, it was not easy for members of the public to find. Additionally, as it had not yet been publicised the majority of people would be unaware of it.

ACTION: The Bus Partnerships Project Director to ensure that the Bus Promise be publicly accessible by the next EP Forum meeting on 26th March.

ACTION: The Bus Partnerships Project Director to work with operators on the implementation of the punctuality data across all websites by 26th March.

Members of the EP Forum had discussed how to engage with non-bus users to attract a wider range of feedback, suggestions included through local authority youth and older people's services and working with partners such as the universities and NHS.

The Stagecoach Representative highlighted the importance of having a proportional representation of users through the various forums and engagement events.

ACTION: The EP Forum Chair to circulate guidance on how to ensure a proportional representation of users to Board Members.

The issue of how to improve communication between operators and bus users was also brought up. The First Representative advised that one way that they were working to address was by committing to consulting the public on any proposed changes to the network going forward. The Director of Public Transport Operations added that the MCA was also looking at refining a more predictable timeline ahead of any major service change.

RESOLVED that the EP Board note the update.

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Bus Operator Updates

First

The First Representative advised that following the service reductions the previous year, First was now in a much better position and had a strong base from which to start looking at growing the network.

Traffic continued to be the main variable impacting both punctuality and reliability. Real time tracking was at 99.5%, however this did not seem to be reflected in the customer experience.

ACTION: Operators to work with the MCA to explore how to align the real time data to match public perception.

Stagecoach Yorkshire

The Stagecoach Representative outlined the current position:

- Reliability was at 97.7%
- Overall punctuality at 77.7%
- 95.04% of journeys were being tracked
- Patronage had increased by 4.8% on the same period last year.
- Driver turnover was down 28% year on year.

He agreed that traffic remained the single biggest contributing factor impacting on punctuality, the recent snow had also caused some delays and cancellations. Although experiencing growth in other areas, patronage amongst English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) pass holders remained low after the pandemic.

The following planned improvements were also highlighted:

- Increased frequency on Dearne Valley routes
- Timetable changes on the Sheffield route 10 to improve punctuality
- Trial reinstatement of evening services in Thurnscoe supported by Barnsley MBC.

Members particularly welcomed the reinstatement of evening services in Thurnscoe and noted their thanks. The Stagecoach Representative confirmed that a joint communications strategy was planned between Stagecoach and Barnsley MBC.

The Director of Public Transport Operations advised that it would be imperative to weigh the costs to the MCA of subsidising ENCTS pass holders against the tendered services budget.

The Executive Director of Transport added that it would be essential to capture a full picture of the improvements already taking place in the region when completing the BSIP.

Stagecoach East Midlands

The CPT Representative informed the Board that Stagecoach East Midlands was increasing the weekday frequency of the no. 22 between Worksop and Doncaster.

TM Travel

The TM Travel Representative noted that they had recently held a successful recruitment open day, which had been supported by the MCA's Routes to Success programme. He had also been working with the MCA to make minor service changes to improve connectivity from April.

RESOLVED that the EP Board note the updates.

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SYMCA Estate

The Director of Public Transport Operations presented an overview of the extent and condition of bus stops and shelters across South Yorkshire.

The SYMCA Estate comprises 7,591 bus stops of which 3,340 have some form of shelter available and 434 also include real time displays.

Approximately, 84% of shelters were installed before 2000, and the general condition of the assets is as you would expect with some in need of repair or replacement. The MCA commits £200,000 per year to replace up to 20 shelters, targeting those known to be in the poorest state of repair. Additionally stops and shelters are often damaged in road traffic collisions, the costs of

which are not always recovered. The MCA also spends £385,000 per year on cleaning stops and shelters every 12 weeks.

The Stagecoach Representative suggested targeting a specific bus corridor and looking to develop a standard for bus stops and shelters across South Yorkshire. Members also considered that the facilities at different stops and shelters should meet the needs of the communities they serve. In some particularly rural areas, bus shelters had been adopted for a variety of uses by the local community. It was noted that the environment around bus stops may have changed since they were introduced and the location of some may no longer be appropriate. Although a number of shelters contain advertising space, this is much less lucrative than it had been previously. It was proposed that this advertising space could be used to promote messages from partners and provide information on disruption affecting the network.

ACTION: The First Representative committed to contributing funds towards bus stop and shelter improvement in opportunity areas where services were due to increase. In instances where the MCA removed a bus stop as there were two in close proximity, she also agreed to refurbish the remaining one.

ACTION: The Director of Public Transport Operations to bring a follow up report on the SYMCA Estate back to the July meeting.

ACTION: The Director of Public Transport Operations to contact the Probation Service to find out whether the improvement of bus stop surroundings could be added to their unpaid work programme.

ACTION: The EP Forum Chair to share the DfT Inclusive Mobility report.

RESOLVED that the EP Board:

1. Notes the information provided on the distribution, age, facilities and facilities provided at bus stops and shelters across South Yorkshire.
2. Supports further work to understand which parts of the network could benefit from accelerated investment in stops and shelters.
3. Consider what improvements could be made to improve the safety of passengers at bus stops and shelters.
4. Share their views as to the relative importance and evidence on the role that high quality stops and shelters help contribute to an attractive bus network.
5. Consider any specific known geographical areas for investment.

89 **Items of Confidentiality**

RESOLVED that the Board agree not to publish operator slides due to the commercially sensitive nature of their contents.

90 **Any Other Business**

The Stagecoach Representative requested that the operator submission deadlines be amended to enable operators to bring as up to date a position to the meeting as possible. Members agreed that this could be explored, however,

operator items would still need to be submitted prior to the internal MCA pre-meet.

ACTION: The Democratic Services Officer to review the meeting timelines with a view to agreeing a later submission deadline for operators.

The Chair noted that this would be the Bus Partnerships Project Director's last meeting and thanked him for his hard work and the progress he had made in this space.

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

Signed

Name

Position

Date