

ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 29 AUGUST 2023 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
Claire Walters	Public Bus Users
Mike Watson	First South Yorkshire
Ross Hitchcock	TM Travel (and other small operators)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Nick Brown	Bus Partnerships Project Director	SYMCA Executive Team
Tim Taylor	Director of Public Transport Operations	SYMCA Executive Team

APOLOGIES:

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

57 Chair's Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, in particular Zoe Hands, the new MD of First South Yorkshire and Claire Walters, interim Chair of the EP Forum. Apologies were noted as above.

58 Minutes & actions of the previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th May be approved.

59 Bus Operator Updates

The Chair invited updates from Operators.

First

First Representatives reported that over the previous 12 months reliability had improved from 95% to 99%. Although punctuality was still only at around 80%, it was anticipated that this should also improve following a review of scheduling and through use of the Prospective software.

Now that service delivery had reached a level of stability, further developments were being explored, for example:

- Trials of electric buses were being conducted in Sheffield to assess how the topography would affect mileage.
- A discounted product for 18-21 year olds was under consideration to replace the Zoom Beyond concession.
- Identifying areas for growth and opportunities for network development.

It was also acknowledged that First were keen to work with the Enhanced Partnership and the MCA to lobby government for more funding and a better deal for South Yorkshire.

The Bus Partnerships Project Director stated that the punctuality data reported to the Board was a rolling 12-month average and it would therefore take some time for any changes to appear in the figures. Any insights on punctuality problem areas to come from the Prospective-led analysis would be welcomed.

The Director of Public Transport Operations added that the MCA had protected as much of the bus network as possible until March 2025. In the meantime, it would be important to improve confidence in the system to increase patronage and grow the network into the future. He also confirmed that discussions had been held at the EP Development Group about operators introducing their own discounted products to replace the concession for 18-21 year olds. The MCA would continue to issue Zoom Beyond passes as proof of eligibility if any operator discounts became available. There was also an existing TravelMaster product and further conversations around their discounted ticket range would be taking place shortly.

Stagecoach

The Stagecoach Representative advised that over the last 18 months the focus had been on recovery and reform to ensure the business was fit for the future. Numerous changes had been taking place in the background, including:

- Increased pay scales across the business.
- Successful recruitment for the renewed engineering apprenticeships.
- Upskilling existing employees with the introduction of the Master Tech engineering grade.

The benefits of these changes were already being seen in a reduced turnover of 27% and improvements in service delivery with reliability now at 96.3% and a 7.1% increase in passenger journeys. However, overall punctuality was at 81.3% although 89.1% of services started on time. This was largely due to congestion.

Stagecoach was expecting delivery of 20 new double deck buses imminently and 23 electric buses were also planned to be introduced into the Rotherham area in the coming winter. Work was ongoing to review the network to reflect new travel patterns following the pandemic.

In response to questions, the Stagecoach Representative advised that the network review was not intended to remove resources but to ensure they were

deployed in the right place. He confirmed that Stagecoach was already considering the potential consequences of the fare cap increase in November as well as how best to transition from the fare cap when it came to an end the following November. The main concern was that after more than 2 years of capped fares, tickets reverting to standard prices could come as a shock to passengers. Officers advocated for operators continuing to plan for the end of the fare cap to achieve a coordinated approach and smoother transition.

TM Travel

The TM Travel Representative informed the Board of work that was currently being undertaken to improve service delivery, such as:

- Providing additional support in the traffic office.
- Increased training and upskilling staff.
- Increased pay scales by 11%.

It was noted that there had been success in other areas transferring passengers from private networks to public services. This approach could be assessed for South Yorkshire.

CPT

The CPT Representative added the group's support in lobbying government for more funding and a better deal for South Yorkshire. The MCA funded driver training programme, Routes to Success was progressing well. It was anticipated that it would provide a pipeline of drivers, particularly for smaller operators. A CPT working group was being set up to look at zero emissions solutions for rural areas.

He reported that he had been receiving feedback about roadworks and commented that a project on highways and traffic management could be something for the EP to take forward. Operators added that this could be a means by which to improve punctuality.

The Director of Public Transport Operations advised a project to address problem areas should be intelligence led. The EP could use available data on punctuality and congestion to identify hot spots and inform a targeted approach.

ACTION: Local authority representatives be invited to the next EP Board meeting to provide updates on highways and traffic management progress.

RESOLVED that the Bus Operator Updates be noted.

Stagecoach Innovation Day

An item on the recent Innovation Day held between the MCA and Stagecoach was presented to the Board.

The aims of the session were to gain a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for bus, and to find a way to work collaboratively to solve customers' travel needs in South Yorkshire.

Stagecoach had been working with The Foundation, to better understand passengers and develop a deeper insight into their travel needs. These needs were split between:

- Primary needs, which must be met to become a viable option (eg; is the bus going to the right place at the right time?), and;
- Secondary needs, other considerations which are influenced by attitudes (eg; ease of use, passenger experience, option to do other things while travelling, environmentally conscious).

In terms of primary needs, emerging data sources were identified as potentially transformational as a means of finding out exactly where, when and how people were travelling across the region. Access to this information would present an opportunity to work collaboratively to share knowledge and would allow operators to design the bus network to align with the public's needs.

Stagecoach had also been conducting a pilot scheme to learn more about secondary needs. A series of immersive innovation days had been held where team members experienced the network first-hand. This work had so far generated over 300 ideas had been prioritised for pilot and, if successful, implementation.

Moving forwards a number of possibilities were proposed:

- A more collaborative approach, with a suggestion for two immersion and innovation days with operators and local authorities.
- Better sharing of knowledge and data to contribute to research and design a more effective network.
- Research into the behaviour of existing and potential bus users with a focus on identifying groups who could be converted to public transport and active travel.
- Taking an agile learning approach, trying ideas but recognising and being willing to abandon them if they are not working.
- The opportunity for South Yorkshire to become a pilot area for future schemes.

ACTION: The Bus Partnerships Project Director and Director of Public Operations to work with the Stagecoach representative to explore the proposals put forward at the Innovation Day. Any developments to be reported back to the Board.

The Chair welcomed the presentation and looked forward to learning about the future developments to come out of this work.

RESOLVED that the Stagecoach Innovation Day update be noted.

EP Forum Update

The Board received a progress report on the work of the EP Forum.

The EP Forum Chair advised that concerns had been raised around the planned network changes. Although network coverage may be greater and

therefore able to meet the needs of more people, service frequency may have to be reduced. The Forum highlighted that in cases where services were reduced to every 90 minutes or 2 hours, it was essential that they be reliable.

Bus Users UK held a 'Catch the Bus' month every September and this would be a good opportunity to publicise the service changes before they came into effect. The roll out of the Bus Promise could also be coordinated around this.

The focus of the next session would be on good consultation practices in preparation for the upcoming franchising consultation. She added that local media was a good way to engage with members of the public who would not otherwise participate. The Director of Public Transport Operations also observed that most bus users were fare paying adults, likely commuting, yet this group was generally underrepresented in consultations. It would be important to explore how to encourage participation from as wide ranging a variety of people as possible.

It was noted that it may be worthwhile to review the role of the Forum and consider how it could remain relevant now that it was coming to the end of its work.

ACTION: The Bus Partnerships Project Director to circulate the notes from previous EP Forum meetings to operators.

RESOLVED that the Stagecoach Innovation Day update be noted.

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EP Progress Update

The Bus Partnerships Project Director updated the Board on progress against the agreed EP project deliverables and targets.

Progress had been made in a number of areas, including:

- The Bus Promise was approved at the last meeting and would be released once all parties confirmed their readiness to deliver the respective standards.
- Regular discussions were being held to ensure that funded bus priority measures are progressing, and that a pipeline of future projects is developed in each local authority area.
- The Travel South Yorkshire (TSY) live departure/ real time information system had been improved and would soon to be released on the website. Work had started on a TSY retail and information app.
- Funding had been allocated for a number of trials of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and work was underway to identify suitable projects.
- Government had extended the £2 fare cap to October 2023 with a further extension for another year at £2.50 to November 2024.
- TravelMaster would be introducing a new all-SY multi-operator, bus-only day, seven-day, 28-day and annual tickets, known as the SYBus product.
- The reliability of services had dipped slightly but remained good at 97.7% for the 12 months to May 2023 against a target of 99.5%.

The following were key areas where progress was behind aspirations set out in the BSIP and EP documents:

- Low levels of government funding have led to difficult decisions to increase the child notified fare from 80p to £1.00; to cut the Zoom Beyond concession for 18-21 year olds; and to reduce the frequency of a number of tendered evening and Sunday services.
- Progress in the delivery of ticket simplification would be dependent on a subsidy being made available for selected TravelMaster multi-operator products which would require additional funding from government.
- Recent slow growth in patronage appears to have plateaued at 62 million journeys per year, 81% of the 2024/25 target.
- The punctuality of services is 77.8% for the 12 months to June 2023, well below the 95% target.
- SYMCA has pulled out of a proposed EP Marketing campaign to promote the extension of the fare cap on the basis that there was no clear evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of such a campaign.
- However, SYMCA would still like to discuss an option to promote more general improvements and investment in the system and network.
- High levels of fraud have led TravelMaster to remove the ability for customers to purchase 7-day passes on board buses using contactless payments.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Board notes the updates on the delivery of specific commitments in the EP programme and performance against agreed network targets provided.

Operators confirm their readiness to deliver the respective standards contained in the South Yorkshire Bus Promise.

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Review of EP Documents

The Board received a report recommending a process for revising the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP), Enhanced Partnership Scheme (EPS) and the EP Terms of Reference.

Reviews of the EP Scheme and Terms of Reference were planned to be undertaken over the next few months and presented to the Board at its meeting on 19 December 2023.

RESOLVED that the Board:

1. Agree to a review of the EP Scheme, with recommendations for consideration at the 19 December 2023 EP Board meeting.
2. Agree to a review of the EP Board terms of reference, with recommendations for consideration at the 19 December 2023 EP Board meeting.

Note a change to the Chair of the EP Forum, and thank Dawn Badminton-Capps for performing the role since its inception.

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Items of Confidentiality

None.

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Any Other Business

ACTION: The Bus Partnerships Project Director to write to Dawn Badminton Capps on behalf of the Board to thank her for her contributions to both the EP Forum and Board.

The Director of Public Transport Operations advised that the MCA had been approached by operators with regards to qualifying agreements.

RESOLVED that operators approve the MCA to facilitate the process to put qualifying agreements in place to allow for coordinated timetables on shared corridors following the service changes.

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

Signed

Name

Position

Date