

## **GOVERNMENT FUNDING CUTS CREATE BUS APOCALYPSE**

*Published 30 June 2022 at 12:01am*

Private sector bus companies will begin removing a third of South Yorkshire's bus network as early as July.

Following a tendering process that concluded this week, people in Sheffield and Rotherham are the first to face withdrawal of several key bus services. This will be followed by further cuts in October when the government withdraws its post-covid funding for buses.

South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard said:

"We are now facing the immediate threat of the biggest and most damaging cuts for a generation.

"People in Sheffield and Rotherham will feel the brunt of these brutal cuts initially next month when private bus companies withdraw their services on the less profitable routes.

"Within our communities, we rely on these services for getting to work, seeing family, caring for others, and of course getting to and spending money in local businesses. These cuts will strike at the heart of our families, our economy, and our communities. They will also unfairly impact on those with mobility and health issues who rely on these bus services as lifelines."

"On my first morning as SY Mayor I wrote to the prime minister and challenged him to urgently deliver on his promised to level up our country. I made it clear that investment in our buses is vital for our region to flourish.

"And yet, despite the promises of the government, we're far from seeing dramatic improvement on public transport, that would take us close to a London style connectivity. We are facing a dramatic cutting of funding, with devastating consequences for our communities.

"That's why I am now calling on the government to urgently work with me to save the bus network in South Yorkshire. I am asking for £85m over three years to keep the service going while the franchising assessment is going through.

"To put that into context, it would allow us to save vital bus routes that our communities desperately rely on to get to work, visit family, get to school and college. And it would mean that private bus companies wouldn't have the power to strip those services from passengers."

Interim Executive Director of Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, Louisa Harrison-Walker said:

“If London faced the closure of the Jubilee Line, Central Line and Circle Line there would be a national outrage. Everything would be done to avoid that happening.

That is effectively what we face here in South Yorkshire. Bus services are essential to the smooth running of our economy. 10,000s of businesses rely on 100,000s of workers being able to travel safely and conveniently to and from work without having to rely on private cars. Young people will see their choices limited as they will find it harder and harder to access the training that suits their needs. Our 16-year-olds have little choice but to use buses. These cuts to services will cut off their futures.

If these cuts to services become a reality the government will be looking the other way as our economy is throttled.”

Bill Adams, TUC Regional Secretary for Yorkshire & the Humber, said:

“Our bus services are in crisis, and working people deserve better.

“Unions have been calling on the government to put together a proper rescue plan for a bus system that has been broken long before the pandemic. One year on, it’s clear the government’s Bus Back Better strategy just isn’t working.

“Low paid workers rely on buses to get them to their jobs. Without a functioning bus system, they will be forced into debt to pay for taxis and cars they cannot afford.

“And for hospitality and night-time economy workers, this is a clear safety issue. Infrequent, or non-existent bus services at night put workers in danger. The government needs to do something about it.

“Trade unions are clear that the answer to this crisis is bus franchising, and public ownership of the network. We’re calling on the government to remove any legal restrictions that stand in the way of the mayor buying back and running services that private operators don’t want.

“If private operators won’t run our bus services, then the mayor has to be allowed to run them as a public service.

“The alternative is bus routes being cut, and that is unacceptable to working people in South Yorkshire.

Dr Ollie Hart, GP and Clinical Director of Heeley Plus Primary Care Network said:

“As clinical director of one of Sheffield’s primary care networks I see affordable, accessible public transport as essential to people’s health and access to health care. It matters to people’s physical and mental health to be able to connect to the opportunities around them. It matters to the health of the planet for there to be low carbon options, and planetary health is the essential foundation for all of us.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

**Press conference invite**

You are invited to a press conference on cuts facing the South Yorkshire bus network. At the press conference will be South Yorkshire's Mayor Oliver Coppard, Interim Executive Director of Sheffield Chamber Louisa Harrison-Walker and TUC's Regional Secretary for Yorkshire & Humber Bill Adams.

Where: Wincobank Village Hall, Newman Rd, Sheffield S9 1LQ.

When: Thursday 30th June at 12.30pm.

Please confirm your attendance at [emily.hughes@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk](mailto:emily.hughes@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk)

**Service changes from 24 July 2022**

**Sheffield**

The following routes will have no provider:

Service 32/32a Sheffield – Firth Park – Parson Cross : Entire service will be withdrawn.

Service 135/135a Rotherham – Sheffield via Chapeltown: Early morning, evening and Saturday/Sunday services will be withdrawn.

Service 208 Whiston - Sheffield: Last evening trip from Sheffield – Whiston will be withdrawn. Sunday daytime service will be withdrawn.

Service X74 Sheffield – Tinsley Park: Some early morning and evening journeys withdrawn.

**Rotherham**

The following routes will have no provider:

Service 73: Early morning, evening, and Sunday services between Rotherham and Treeton will be withdrawn.

Service 114: Early morning and evening services between Rotherham and Herringthorpe will be withdrawn.

Service 116: Early morning, evening, and Sunday services between Rotherham, Thrybergh and Ravenfield will be withdrawn.

Service 135/135a: Early morning, evening and Saturday/Sunday services between Rotherham and Thorpe Hesley plus links to Chapeltown will be removed.

Service 208 Whiston - Sheffield: Last evening trip from Sheffield – Whiston will be withdrawn. Sunday daytime service will be withdrawn.

Service X74 Sheffield – Tinsley Park: Some early morning and evening journeys withdrawn.

South Yorkshire's bus network

1. The Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for the national bus policy framework, ad hoc capital funding to local authorities and operators, and legislation:

- Over more than 30 years, the DfT has stated an aim to increase bus use and halt the decline that has continued since the 1950s.
- In March 2021, the Government launched 'Bus Back Better' – a National Bus Strategy for England. This Strategy set out a requirement for local transport authorities to prepare and publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by 31 October 2021, with the aim of making bus the mode of choice for the many.
- The Government pledged £3 billion in funding across the country to help realise the aims of the National Bus Strategy and BSIPs.
- SYMCA received nothing despite lodging a bid for £434m to achieve BSIP objectives for the region including capping fares, free travel for young people, quicker journeys, more journey options, and zero emission buses to make travel cleaner and greener towards a net-zero future.

2. In March 2022, SYMCA authorised the assessment of a proposed bus franchising scheme in South Yorkshire. The notice of intention sets in motion the legally-required work to see whether a franchising model – which would bring regulation of routes, frequencies, fares, and tickets under local control – could help efforts to transform the region's transport. Since becoming South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard has appointed a Franchising Manager to oversee the process at pace.

3. In April 2022, SYMCA formally agreed an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme to deliver South Yorkshire's BSIP. More information: <https://southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/explore/transport>.

4. The Government's Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) was set up to support commercial bus operators in England due to the ongoing impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) on their revenue from reduced passenger numbers. BRG funding support from Government ends on 4 October 2022.

\*Source: National Audit Office <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Improving-local-bus-services-in-England-outside-London.pdf>