

MCA - ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2022 AT 2.00 PM

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



PRESENT:

Mayor Oliver Coppard (Chair)	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
Pat Beijer	SYMCA Executive Team
Dawn Badminton-Capps	Public Bus Users
John Dowie	SYMCA Executive Team
Stephen Edwards	SYMCA Executive Team
Ian Humphreys	First Yorkshire
Matt Kitchin	Stagecoach Yorkshire
Councillor Chris Read	Rotherham MBC
Ross Hitchcock (Reserve)	TM Travel (and other small operators)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Nikki Belfield	Head of Mayor's Office	SYMCA Executive Team
Tom Carney	Director of Communications, Engagement and Marketing	SYMCA Executive Team
Jonathan Guest	Head of Policy	SYMCA Executive Team
Ellen Hinsley	Minute Taker	SYMCA Executive Team

APOLOGIES:

Andrew McGuinness CPT

18 **Chair's Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for not being there in person.

Members reflected with disappointment on the cuts to the bus network that had been implemented over the past week but anticipated that the remaining services would be more robust and reliable. They reaffirmed their commitment to improving South Yorkshire's bus network.

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

The Director of Public Transport Development informed the Board that a meeting had been arranged with the Department for Transport (DfT) on 7 October to receive feedback on the MCA's unsuccessful request for Bus Service Improvement Plan Funding (BSIP). This is the first time the DfT have

offered specific feedback to SYMCA's BSIP, which was submitted on 29 October 2021. This will enable the MCA to prepare a more informed challenge to the funding decision.

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved.

20 **Enhanced Partnership Operating Group Progress Report**

The Corporate Director of Public Transport introduced a progress report on the Enhanced Partnership (EP) Operations Group.

The MCA was supporting a number of at risk bus services until summer 2023, however there were several services for which an operator was unable to be found.

Operators advised that the discontinued services had been operating at a loss and staff shortages had been impacting on reliability. Early signs showed an improvement in the remaining network.

The EP Operations Group had agreed that significant service changes should take place on a regular six month schedule to familiarise passengers with when to expect timetable alterations. Price changes had also been limited to once per year and would be considered further.

It was noted that while some deviation was inevitable, the aim was to avoid the confusion caused by the existing approach of continual changes.

Action: The Director of Public Transport to develop an agreed schedule for significant service changes prior to the next meeting.

Action: The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place to write to DfT on behalf of the Board, to raise concerns around the short notice of Government funding decisions and its effect on planning and implementation.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted, and any necessary actions be recommended back to the EP Operations Group for consideration.

21 **Operator Plans for Bus Recovery Grant and Short–Medium Term Service Changes (Verbal)**

Operators provided updates on the current situation following the implementation of service changes.

The Board was informed that of the passengers who had travelled with Stagecoach since the changes had come into effect:

- 90% had experienced no change to their journey;
- 6% had been affected by timetable or route alterations;
- 2% had lost a service, however alternatives were available;
- 2% had reported an improvement.

The First South Yorkshire representative advised that the reductions in service had been made in response to a lack of resources in order to ensure delivery. Initial indications were positive.

Operators intended to expand services further as capacity increased and that ultimately the aim was to grow the sector in South Yorkshire.

The Director of Public Transport Development stated that it would be helpful to monitor passenger impact over time and in line with the EP targets.

It was suggested that Local Authorities could work with Bus Operators as part of any 'return to work' schemes, particularly in areas where recruitment struggled.

Action: The Stagecoach Representative to update the Leader of Rotherham MBC on the Dearne Valley services.

22

Towards a Patronage Recovery Action Plan

The Director of Public Transport Development presented a report on the Patronage Recovery Action Plan covering the present up until March 2023.

Concern had been raised around the EP target of 77 million passengers per annum, as the current estimated annual patronage level was 55.6 million. Early action would be critical in achieving the target.

It was proposed to focus on activities that could be implemented quickly, and which would have an immediate impact on patronage, including:

- Improved accurate service data;
- Access to information;
- Bus priority;
- Bus detection;
- Targeted marketing;
- Seasonal discounts;
- 'Tap and cap';
- Targeted bus service improvement areas;
- Early wins on ticketing and fares.

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place advised that there was still work to be done on bringing all workstreams together and cooperation would be crucial. While important to contemplate on the longer term possibilities, the focus should be on options which could be delivered in 2023 and even in the first quarter.

It was considered that simplifying fares across operators, improving the accuracy of data and access to information would be positive steps forward. The Board discussed consolidating the data that was currently available across various platforms into a single point of information. It was felt that this would streamline the process and minimise confusion over where to find information on buses in South Yorkshire. A target for delivery was agreed for 6 months.

Marketing was also identified as a method of increasing bus usage and could be linked to any offers on fares. Once the network had stabilised following the latest changes, a package of benefits could be used as the focus of a campaign to persuade the public to travel by public transport.

Local Authorities could also encourage the public to use the bus network on their websites by providing details of relevant bus services to get to council facilities such as libraries and swimming pools.

Action: The Democratic Services Officer to add the £2 fare cap to the agenda of the November meeting.

Action: The Director of Public Transport Development to produce an ambitious, targeted marketing plan using available data to ensure efficacy.

Action: The Mayor to arrange a meeting with the Bus Users representative to discuss how to increase passenger levels as a matter of urgency.

Action: The Director of Public Transport Development to explore possibility of a seasonal marketing campaign in time for Christmas.

Resolved that:

1. The contents of the paper to be noted;
2. Feedback to be provided on the suggestions for inclusion in a Patronage Recovery Action Plan;
3. Support to be provided where required for any agreed activities.

23

Data Plan - Exchange & Analysis

The Head of Policy outlined a three-stage plan to explore what data and research was available to inform short term action and beyond to attract more customers to the bus network.

A collaborative approach was recommended with operators and the MCA pooling data to create informed interventions to improve demand. Gaps in intelligence and areas for future research were also considered.

The Board welcomed the Plan and the aspiration to make better informed decisions based on real world data. It was important to respond accordingly to emerging trends such as the cost of living crisis, which would likely boost demand for public transport.

Action: Director of Public Transport Development, Head of Policy and Bus Operators to come up with a shortlist of areas for potential growth using available data to be presented to the November meeting.

Resolved that:

1. The content of the paper setting out a three-staged data plan be noted;
2. A steer be provided as to what data could be most beneficial in supporting demand improvement activities, on which basis the team will develop a more detailed delivery plan and;
3. The arrangement of a follow up meeting with data experts from all partners in the EP be endorsed, to determine what stage 1 data is

particularly useful to support demand change and to facilitate data sharing (stage 1).

24 **Notice of Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation**

The Director of Public Transport Development advised that a variation of the EP Scheme was being sought due to a number of emerging developments.

Details of the proposed variations had been circulated and approved prior to the meeting.

The EP Forum met for the first time on 28 September 2022 and began the development of the Customer Charter. The chosen approach necessitated a change in wording. It was also proposed that the review of single operator products and premium levels on multi-operator tickets be deferred following Government's announcement of a national, temporary £2 flat single fare in 2023.

Members advised that they felt that the work on multi-operator tickets should be prioritised.

Action: The Corporate Director of Public Transport to arrange a meeting between EP Board representatives and Travel Master to discuss the multi-operator tickets.

(The Head of Policy left the meeting.)

Resolved that the contents of the proposed variation to the EP Scheme be considered and approved in correspondence, no later than 30 September 2022.

25 **Enhanced Partnership Forum - First Meeting Feedback (Verbal)**

The Bus Users representative provided an update following the first meeting of the EP Forum.

A wide variety of people had attended the meeting which was focussed on the customer charter. It had been agreed that the charter should be underpinned by meaningful targets which had consequences if they were not delivered. The customer charter would also recognise the separate responsibilities of operators, customers, and stakeholders.

The Forum was keen to promote bus services and persuade people to start using or return to public transport. It was also acknowledged that information should be provided in a non-digital format to public facilities.

Concerns had been raised that there was no single point of contact.

Resolved that the feedback be received.

Enhanced Partnership Scheme Progress Report

The Director of Public Transport Development introduced a report on the progress of the EP Scheme.

Milestones had been reached in the previous two months including:

- The Levelling Up Fund bid had been submitted;
- The EP Development Group had prioritised 6 activities for development.

It was added that the MCA also had the opportunity to pilot a demand responsive transport (DRT) service and to implement further Net Zero buses.

The Director of Public Transport Development informed the Board that work on the DRT scheme was progressing. A meeting had recently taken place where the shaping of a DRT pilot and identification of funding sources had been discussed.

Action: The Director of Public Transport Development to provide a regular update on the progress of the DRT Scheme to the Board.

Resolved that the contents of the paper in relation to progress with the Enhanced Partnership Scheme be noted and support be provided where required.

Matters Arising

As there was no other business to discuss the Chair thanked all for their input and attendance and closed the meeting.

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

Signed

Name

Position

Date