

Enhanced Partnership Board

Tuesday, 09 May 2023

Approval of South Yorkshire Bus Promise (Customer Charter)

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Policy Decision
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?	Not a Key Decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

John Dowie, Executive Director Infrastructure and Place

Report Author(s):

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 Nick Brown, Project Director, Bus Partnerships

Executive Summary

The Enhanced Partnership (EP) has agreed to develop a customer charter (to be known as the South Yorkshire Bus Promise) to articulate the standards that bus users should expect from the bus network in South Yorkshire. This work has been progressed through the Enhanced Partnership Forum, which includes representatives of bus users, operators and local authorities. A draft South Yorkshire Bus Promise is presented in Appendix 1 for approval.

Once approved, a decision is required on whether to publish this immediately, or await the development of an interactive tool on the Travel South Yorkshire website that communicates the content in an engaging, customer-focused way. This is likely to take 2-3 months.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

The Enhanced Partnership has been created to achieve a step change in the performance of the bus network in the South Yorkshire region. The South Yorkshire Bus Promise is an important step in setting out what bus users should expect from the network, and represents a shared commitment from EP partners.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Board members:

1. Approve the draft South Yorkshire Bus Promise attached as Appendix 1
2. Decide EITHER (a) to publish the Bus Promise immediately OR (b) to await the development of a proposed interactive tool on the Travel South Yorkshire website that communicates the content in an engaging, customer-focused way.

1. Background

1.1 It is important that bus users and potential bus users have a clear understanding of the standards they can expect from the bus service network in South Yorkshire. Achieving confidence that these standards will be met will help encourage new users to the bus system and grow bus patronage. The standards that user should expect has been articulated in the South Yorkshire Bus Promise, included as Appendix 1.

1.2 The South Yorkshire Bus Promise has been developed through the Enhanced Partnership Forum, which is made up of representatives of bus users, operators, local authorities and SYMCA.

1.3 The EP Forum has emphasised the need to be clear about the role and purpose of the Bus Promise. It is a positive expression of:

- The standards that bus users should expect from the South Yorkshire bus network; and
- The best endeavours of partners (operators, local authorities and SYMCA) to deliver to these standards.

The EP Forum considered that, to be meaningful, the document should be ambitious but realistic about what is achievable.

2. Content

2.1 The South Yorkshire Bus Promise expresses the standards that users should expect in four “phases” of the bus journey:

1. Before your bus journey
2. Waiting for your bus
3. On your bus journey
4. After your bus journey

In each case, an overall high level statement of expectations is followed by a series of more detailed standards that partners have agreed should be delivered.

3. Publication and use

3.1 The intention is that the Bus Promise should be used both to guide improvements in the system, and as a communication tool.

3.2 In relation to system improvements, the Bus Promise provides a framework to allow transparent reporting of progress. As such it complements, and is consistent with, the performance targets already established in the Enhanced Partnership (for example in relation to punctuality and reliability). It is proposed that the EP Board receives a report on performance with meeting the standards from the EP Forum on a 6-monthly basis.

3.3 The Bus Promise will also be a powerful tool to communicate what users should expect from the bus system, and to help in the process of attracting non-users to switch to using buses. To this end, it is proposed that an interactive tool on the Travel South Yorkshire website is developed to bring the document to life, and help the user to find other relevant information. Development of this tool is likely to take 2-3 months, once the Bus Promise has been finalised.

4. Communication

4.1 It is important that the Bus Promise is widely communicated to bus users and non-users, and the proposal to develop the interactive tool on the Travel South Yorkshire website is designed to support this. The EP Board is asked to decide whether to publish the Bus Promise immediately after the decision to approve it; or to wait for 2-3 months until the interactive tool has been developed.

4.2 In addition, it is proposed to use the Bus Promise in a range of marketing initiatives through the next year and beyond.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that Board members:

1. Approve the draft South Yorkshire Bus Promise attached as Appendix 1.
2. Decide EITHER (a) to publish the Bus Promise immediately OR (b) to await the development of a proposed interactive tool on the Travel South Yorkshire website that communicates the content in an engaging, customer-focused way.

6. Consultation on Proposal

6.1 The Bus Promise has been developed in consultation with representatives of bus users, operators and local authorities.

7. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

8.1 No financial or procurement decisions are recommended in this paper. Any financial implications resulting from schemes and proposals referred to in this paper will be subject to their own financial and policy approval processes.

9. Legal Implications and Advice

9.1 The Bus Promise is not a legally enforceable document, and has not specific legal implications.

10. Human Resources Implications and Advice

10.1 Not applicable.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

11.1 The Bus Promise makes significant reference to ensuring the bus network is accessible for all.

12. Climate Change Implications and Advice

12.1 Bus use supports a move to a zero carbon transport system.

13. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

13.1 Not applicable.

14. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

14.1 Set out above.

15. List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Draft South Yorkshire Bus Promise