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MCA - TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

FRIDAY, 17 MARCH 2023 AT 10.00 AM

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



PRESENT:

Peter Kennan (Co-Chair)	Private Sector LEP Board Member
Councillor Robert Frost	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Mazher Iqbal	Sheffield City Council
Sarah Norman	Barnsley MBC
John Dowie	SYMCA Executive Team
Councillor Mark Houlbrook (Reserve)	City of Doncaster Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Pat Beijer	Director of Public Transport Development	SYMCA Executive Team
Nick Brown	Bus Partnerships Project Director	SYMCA Executive Team
Leanne Richardson	Senior Programme Controls Officer	SYMCA Executive Team
Richard Sulley	Net Zero Project Director	SYMCA Executive Team
Tim Taylor	Director of Public Transport Operations	SYMCA Executive Team
George Beard	Consultant	Market Infra
Jonathan Hind	Consultant	Market Infra
Tom Hudson	Consultant	Market Infra
Ellen Hinsley	Minute Taker	SYMCA Executive Team

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Chris Read	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Joe Blackham	City of Doncaster Council
Councillor Dominic Beck	Rotherham MBC

77 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies as above.

78 Declarations of Interest by Individual Members in Relation to Any Item of Business on the Agenda.

Members declared interests in projects relating to their Local Authority areas.

Cllr Houlbrook declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 as the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Waste at CDC. He also declared an

interest in agenda item 10, specifically the 'West Road School Street' scheme which fell within his ward.

79 **Urgent items / Announcements**

None.

80 **Public Questions of Key Decisions**

A member of the public had submitted a request for an update on the progress of the bus franchising scheme following its launch a year ago.

The Board responded that since the MCA's decision to start an assessment of a bus franchising scheme, work had been ongoing to progress this, with Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines being closely followed.

A Notice of Intent (a legal requirement) had been issued the same month and the Case for Change had now been written and the objectives and options established for the next stage of the assessment, which would compare bus franchising with the current situation.

The MCA had appointed specialist advisors to develop the Business Case as this would require considerable technical expertise and would conclude the assessment of a bus franchising scheme for South Yorkshire. It was anticipated that the assessment would be completed within the next six months, which would enable the MCA Board to take a decision on whether to progress bus franchising to the next stages of external independent audit and public consultation.

In the meantime, the MCA was working with bus operators and Councils, through the Enhanced Partnership (EP), to improve bus services in South Yorkshire.

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place noted that an update on Franchising would be presented to Members later in the meeting and therefore the minutes of the meeting could provide additional information.

ACTION: The Democratic Services Officer to notify the member of the public once the draft minutes were published online.

81 **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

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

82 **Matters Arising / Action Log**

The Director of Public Transport Operations advised that in relation to Minutes No. 70a and 70b, some of these actions would be addressed during agenda item 8.a.

Given the fluid nature of bus funding at the present time, it was deemed sensible to wait to contact the business community until any cuts to the bus network were confirmed.

RESOLVED that the Action Log be noted.

83 **Transport Update**

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place updated the Board on the latest announcements from DfT.

On rail, media coverage had mainly centred on a number of delays to the HS2 programme due to budgetary pressures. The MCA was still awaiting the study on HS2 to Leeds and a number of services that had been removed during the pandemic had not yet been reinstated.

Similarly, improvements to the A1(M) at Doncaster had been pushed back and would now not begin until 2030 at the earliest. There had also been a significant cut to the capital for active travel, which had been reduced by around a quarter over the next few years.

Members expressed their disappointment that the region had once again been left behind, as connectivity was seen as central to employment, investment and ultimately levelling up. It was concerning that many of the schemes promoting public transport were being cut or delayed especially at a time when the region was attempting to move towards net zero,

The Chair observed that although there had been no further cuts on rail services, planned reductions in the size of the trains is likely to cause further overcrowding. The Director of Public Transport Operations reassured Members that the MCA was engaging with train operating companies to press for resources to be deployed based on passenger demand.

RESOLVED that the Transport Update be noted.

84 **Bus Services**

84a **Bus Recovery Grant Extension**

The Board was provided with an update on the current situation on the funding of bus services following Government's continuation of the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG).

The latest BRG extension had been confirmed until 30 June 2023, which also coincided with the extension of the £2 fare cap on bus. In the short term this announcement would reduce the expected dependence on financial reserves, leaving an estimated £4.54m available for the protection of priority bus services as previously agreed by the MCA. Following discussion with local authorities, these funds were planned to be used to support non-statutory school services beyond July 2024 and to supplement the tendered services budget from July 2023.

While Members welcomed the extension of BRG funding and the £2 fare cap on bus, they agreed that this was likely to be a short term reprieve rather than a sustainable solution. It was noted that the MCA was currently tendering for 3 year bus service contracts in order to try to provide some stability.

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place added that South Yorkshire was particularly vulnerable to bus cuts, an issue which was being continually raised with Government.

RESOLVED that Transport and Environment Board members:

1. Note the recent funding extension by DfT of Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) and £2 fare cap and the benefits, albeit short-term, for bus services in South Yorkshire.
2. Acknowledge the expected reduced pressure on the use of SYMCA reserves as a result of the funding extension announced.
3. Recognise the complexity and uncertainty of the future funding landscape, compounded by the late decisions from Department of Transport on any extension to Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding.

84b **Update on Partnerships and Franchising**

The Bus Partnerships Project Director introduced an item on the progress of the Enhanced Partnership (EP) in increasing passenger levels.

(The Director of Public Transport Development joined the meeting.)

A comprehensive programme had been developed to improve services and encourage the public to use the bus. The programme focussed on:

- Improved punctuality and reliability (driver recruitment, bus priority and timetabling);
- Better customer experience (single source of information, improved real time live departure information and consistent bus lane operating times);
- Simplified fares (streamlining range of multi-operator products and 'tap and cap');
- Marketing (single network identity and joint "back to bus" promotions).

The delivery of the programme would require the MCA, local authorities and bus operators to work together and make some difficult decisions. A particularly difficult period was anticipated when the £2 fare cap on bus comes to an end and should any further service cuts be confirmed in July.

The Director of Public Transport Development presented an update on the progress of the bus franchising assessment.

The assessment phase of the process is well underway. The development of the case for change and objective setting stages have been completed. Grant Thornton have been commissioned to develop a five case business case setting out the options available.

Once the assessment phase is concluded, the MCA Board will decide whether to proceed with the next stage. Should the Board decide to continue, an audit of the process will be undertaken, followed by a public consultation before a final decision on whether to implement franchising is made.

(The Net Zero Project Director joined the meeting.)

Members raised concerns around extending bus lane operating hours and the effect this could have on local businesses. It was recognised that the pandemic had caused a shift in public's behaviour towards using the car, which would be difficult to reverse without significant improvements in public transport.

ACTION: The Bus Partnerships Project Director to explore the possibility of conducting economic impact research in relation to bus priority works.

It was acknowledged that there was a great deal of public interest in bus franchising. Members requested that regular updates be shared with local authorities.

ACTION: The Director of Public Transport Development to include relevant colleagues and meetings at local authorities in any franchising engagement activities.

RESOLVED that the Update on Partnerships and Franchising be noted.

85

Hydrogen Refuelling Hub for Freight Transport

The Board was presented with the findings of a study into using hydrogen as a fuel source for freight transport.

The study had focussed specifically on:

- The production of "green hydrogen" (produced using renewable sources of electricity);
- The required infrastructure, refuelling stations, equipment and how to establish a site in the most effective location;
- The potential demand and possible users of hydrogen in the region.

It was anticipated that hydrogen demand would increase in phases over the next 10 years. Engagement with stakeholders had found that there was a potential demand for over 5000 kilos of hydrogen per day in Doncaster. A number of suitable sites had also been identified.

Members welcomed the report and expressed interest in receiving further information and invited the possibility of considering an item on hydrogen at local authority committee meetings, as appropriate.

RESOLVED that the Hydrogen Refuelling Hub for Freight Transport be noted.

Programme Approvals

The Board considered the progression of 3 schemes to full approval, 1 to Outline Business Case with the release of development cost funding and delegated approval to progress 1 to full approval.

It was noted that the York Road to Melton Road Trans Pennine Trail Improvements scheme had now completed the assurance process and a further 5 schemes had been approved by the MCA Board on 6 March.

RESOLVED that the Board approve the following schemes and grant delegated authority to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Section 73 and Monitoring Officer to enter into legal agreements for:

1. Progression of 'T0014/2 Doncaster Active Travel – Mexborough Gateway' Full Business Case (FBC) and award of £1.2m grant to Doncaster City Council subject to the conditions set out in Appendix A1;
2. Approval of 'O0045 West Road School Street' Business Justification Case (BJC) and award of £0.06m grant to Doncaster City Council subject to the conditions set out in Appendix A2;
3. Approval of 'O0036 – Active Travel Capability and Ambition Funding' BJC and award of £0.17m grant to Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, £0.21 to Doncaster City Council, £0.18m to Rotherham Metropolitan Council and £0.4m to Sheffield City Council subject to the conditions set out in Appendix A3; and
4. Approval of 'CRSTS47 – Park and Ride Conisbrough Rail Station' Strategic Business Case (SBC) and release of development cost funding of £0.09m to South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority subject to the conditions set out in Appendix B1.

The Board delegate authority for the approval of the proposal for the following scheme to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Co-Chairs of such Board due to timing:

5. Progression of "CRSTS10: York Road to Melton Road Trans Pennine Trail Improvements" BJC to full approval and award of £0.35m grant to Doncaster City Council, subject to the conditions set out in the Assurance Summary attached at Appendix C1.

The Board note that approval of the following schemes was secured from the MCA Board on 6 March 2023, and delegated authority was granted to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Section 73 and Monitoring Officer to enter into legal agreements:

6. Progression of "T0026/3 Rotherham Town Centre Active Travel Package – Sheffield Road Phases 1-3" Full Business Case (FBC) to full approval and award of £8.6m grant to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council subject to the conditions set out in Appendix D1;
7. Progression of "T0019 Kelham - Active Travel and Public Transport" from FBC to full approval and award of up-to £16.05m to Sheffield City Council (SCC) subject to the conditions set out in Appendix D2;
8. Progression of "T0005 A.631 Rotherham to Maltby Bus Corridor" from FBC to full approval and award of £2.55m to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) subject to the conditions set out in Appendix

- D3;
9. Progression of “D0021 Electric Community Transport Minibus Project” from FBC to full approval and award of £1.4m to South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority subject to the conditions set out in Appendix D4; and
 10. Progression of “G0005 Market Gate Bridge” from FBC to full approval and award of £2.5m to Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council subject to the conditions set out in Assurance Summary attached at Appendix D5.

87 **Any Other Business**

None.

In accordance with Combined Authority’s Constitution/Terms of Reference for the Board, Board decisions need to be ratified by the Head of Paid Services (or their nominee) in consultation with the Chair of the Board. Accordingly, the undersigned has consulted with the Chair and hereby ratifies the decisions set out in the above minutes.

Signed

Name

Position

Date

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