

## Enhanced Partnership Board

Tuesday, 20 February 2024

### SYMCA Estate

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

**Director Approving Submission of the Report:**  
 Pat Beijer, Interim Executive Director (Transport)

**Report Author(s):**  
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#### Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the extent of bus stops and shelters across South Yorkshire for which SYMCA is responsible for their day-to-day management. It outlines the distribution, type, age and maintenance of the assets, and what opportunities might exist in improving the asset and hence the overall customer experience.

#### 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. As part of the Enhanced Partnership, the bus stop and/or shelter form an integral part of the overall customer experience when using the network, so a high-quality estate of stops and shelters is known to contribute to the perception of an effective bus network.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the EP Board:

1. Notes the information provided on the distribution, age, facilities and facilities provided at bus stops and shelters across South Yorkshire.
2. Supports further work to understand which parts of the network could benefit from accelerated investment in stops and shelters.
3. Consider what improvements could be made to improve the safety of passengers at bus stops and shelters.
4. Share their views as to the relative importance and evidence on the role that high quality stops and shelters help contribute to an attractive bus network.
5. Consider any specific known geographical areas for investment.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides an overview of the attributes of the South Yorkshire bus stop and shelter network, and the responsibilities it has in order to maintain and manage an extensive portfolio of assets.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 SYMCA inherited as part of the integration of Sheffield City Region and SYPTE an estate of bus stops and shelters across the entire county of South Yorkshire. This estate comprises 7,591 bus stops of which 3,340 have some form of shelter available at the stop. The distribution by Local Authority is as follows:

<b>District</b>	<b>Stop Only</b>	<b>Stop with Shelter</b>	<b>Total</b>
Barnsley	757	596	<b>1353</b>
Doncaster	1002	686	<b>1688</b>
Rotherham	810	721	<b>1531</b>
Sheffield	1682	1337	<b>3019</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4251</b>	<b>3340</b>	<b>7591</b>

Our bus shelters range widely in their age. Approximately, just over 84% of shelters were installed before 2000, with the remaining 16% largely installed before 2017.

Therefore, the general condition of the assets is as you would expect for something which is exposed to the elements for well over 20 years, and as such, some are in need of either significant repair or replacement.

2.2 Some of our shelters contain real time information displays. These allow waiting passengers to know when timetabled services are due, and importantly where buses are tracked in real time, the number of minutes counting down for a service to arrive. The distribution by Local Authority is as follows:

<b>District</b>	<b>Real Time Displays</b>	<b>%</b>
Barnsley	51	12%
Doncaster	76	18%
Rotherham	103	24%
Sheffield	202	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>	

2.3 SYMCA undertakes an annual shelter replacement programme which makes use of an agreed allocation of £200,000 funding from capital to replace up to 20 shelters per year. This looks to target those locations which are known to be in the poorest state of repair and/or have received numerous complaints from members of the public or councillors as to their condition.

2.4 It is not uncommon for shelters to be vandalised by members of the public, including the breaking of glass panels, graffiti or damage to the structure itself. Our annual budget for repairing stops and shelters for damage is around £535,000 and we typically have around 550 instances of damage per year. In cases where there is repeated vandalism of the shelter, we have looked to replace glass panelling with mesh steel panelling which is much more resilient to damage but does detract from the attractiveness and sense of safety at the stop (making the area under the shelter often much darker).

2.5 Stops and shelters are also frequently damaged as a result of road traffic collisions. Where known, the details of the driver involved are shared with SYMCA and we seek to recover the cost of repair or replacement from the driver's insurance. However, it is not uncommon for drivers to be uninsured, or for the driver and vehicle to have left the scene without their details being captured.

In these circumstances we look to replace with a temporary stop pole as a minimum and where possible, replace with a shelter in due course. There are however a number of locations where this has not been affordable, and the location remains without any shelter since its damage and removal.

2.6 Our stop and shelter estate is subject to a cleaning regime every 12 weeks. This includes a jet wash of the structure and a visual check for damage, vandalism or need for repair. We currently spend £385,000 per year on this programme.

2.7 A proportion of our shelter estate contains advertisement panels. In total there are 349 panels on the estate which are a mixture of paper and digital format advertising.

We sell the right to exploit our shelters to a company called Aight Media, who in turn sell the advertising space to ad space companies working on behalf of commercial organisations wishing to promote their products or services. This generates income to SYMCA and has also provided some additional shelter

investment at the start of the contract, with 100 new shelters being installed as part of the contract go live. The current 10-year contract is due to end in 2029.

### 3. Issues and Opportunities

3.1 Our stop and shelter estate has suffered from a period of under investment, largely as a result of Transport Levy reductions imposed on SYPTE in the past decade. This has seen both the available funding to replace shelters reduce, but also the frequency with which stops and shelters are cleaned. Prior to budget reductions they were visited and cleaned every two weeks (so 26 times a year); they are now visited and cleaned only once every 12 weeks.

3.2 Stops and shelters have been installed and repaired tactically for many years. This has been in response to damage to old shelters, replacement through the annual programme of old and dilapidated shelters, or responses to requests for a new shelter to be installed at a location.

As such, there is a mixture of both stop and shelter types as well as the frequency (i.e. gaps between) of shelters, with some instances where stops are less than 150m apart. There may therefore be an appetite to review stop locations and amend or remove stops (subject to appropriate local consultation) to improve the overall journey times of buses. This exercise would be further supported with stop-level boarding data provided by operators to understand the number of passengers who use specific stops.

3.3 We know that passengers sometime feel unsafe whilst waiting at bus stops. This may be a function of its condition (e.g. suffering from vandalism or graffiti), poor or no lighting, positioning and the wider public realm in which it is contained.

We also know that we have a commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour on our bus network, so there is an opportunity to consider how we assess and better understand passenger perception of safety at stops across South Yorkshire, and what interventions could help in improving their sense of safety.

3.4 The Enhanced Partnership is committed, through its Bus Promise, that all stops have access to a timetable. As described above, some stops also have the provision of a shelter, lighting, real time display and seating.

It is recommended that SYMCA undertakes an assessment of stop facilities and attributes and reconciles these to the frequency of services which serve the stop, and the number of passengers which make use of the stop.

As an example, a stop or shelter which is served by a low frequency (e.g. hourly) service and which is located in a neighbourhood which has a high proportion of elderly passengers in its demographic would be better served with seating relative to a city centre stop which has a high frequency of services.

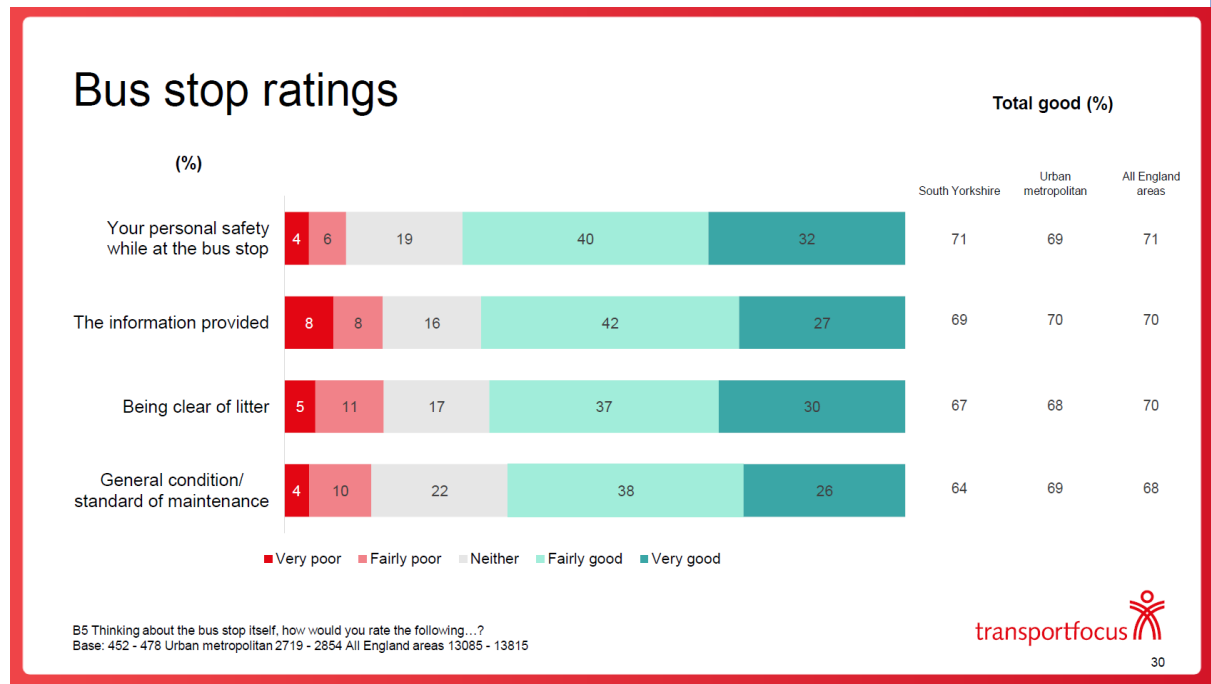
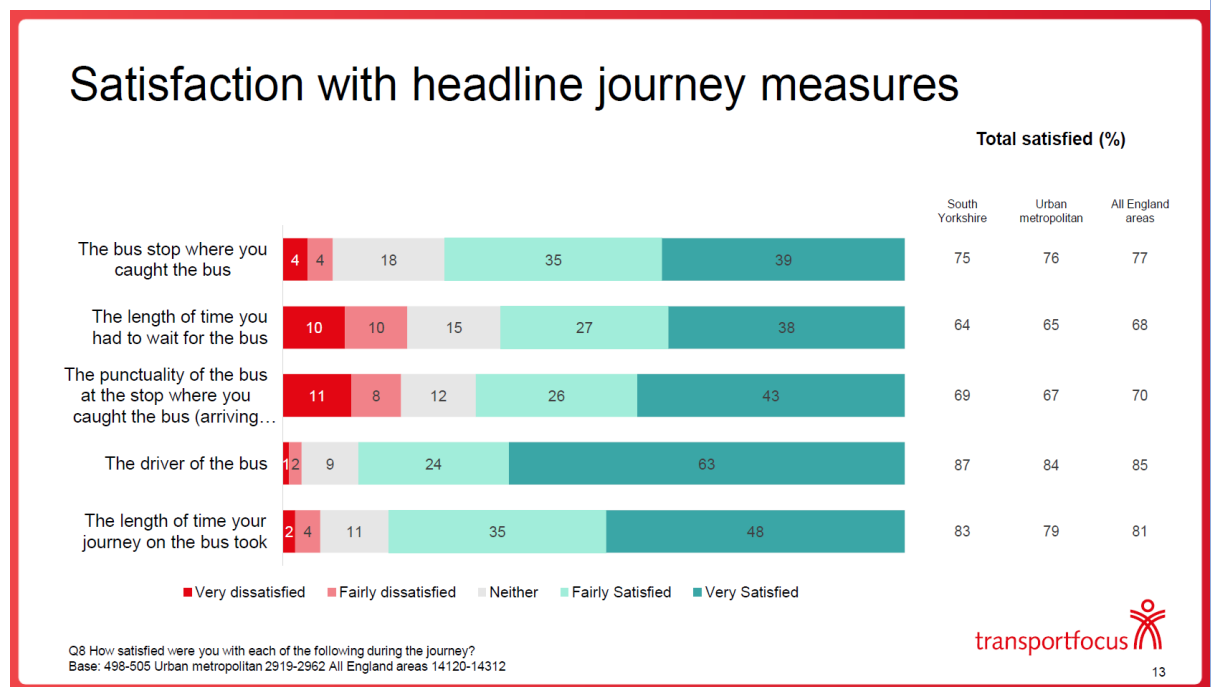
3.5 There also remains an opportunity to discuss through the Enhanced Partnership activity which would help understand which parts of the network could benefit from accelerated investment in stops and shelters, aligned to service and fleet investment, to improve the overall end to end customer offer on a given service or

for a given route corridor. This could be aligned to areas of service investment, be that frequency or service enhancements, or fleet investment, such as the introduction of electric vehicles.

3.6

We know that the quality and suitability of where passengers wait for bus stops has a bearing on their perception of the quality of the overall service. It is fair to say however that the satisfaction of the stop is of relative minor importance to the bus arriving on time and arriving at the destination on time without experiencing punctuality problems.

This is borne out by Transport Focus survey results from 2023 below:



A discussion amongst Enhanced Partnership Board members on the relative importance and evidence on the role that high quality stops and shelters help contribute to an attractive bus network would therefore be welcome.

#### **4. Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 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.

#### **7. Legal Implications and Advice**

7.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **8. Human Resources Implications and Advice**

8.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

9.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **10. Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

11.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**

12.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **13. List of Appendices Included**

None.