

Key current activities to improve transport in Barnsley

Transforming Cities Fund

In September 2018, Sheffield City Region (SCR) were confirmed as eligible to submit a bid to the Department for Transport's £1.22bn Transforming Cities Fund. Working with Local Authorities, the SCR submitted a draft strategic outline business case (SOBC) to the Department for Transport (DfT) in June 2019 and is working to submit the final business case in November. The proposed interventions in SCR will include public transport, active travel and enhancing accessibility to/from and at rail stations.

The draft Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) submitted in June included three funding scenarios for the four-year programme as requested by DfT – these are labelled 'Low' (£183m), 'Medium' (£204m) and 'High' (£227m). TCF will invest in public transport on priority corridors, active travel and enhanced accessibility to and from train stations. Interventions in Barnsley include:

- Addressing a location of existing public transport delays on the A61 Wakefield Road, by a combination of bus lanes and junction improvements, linked to complementary corridor proposals in the Leeds City Region, along with active travel improvements along the corridor.
- Bus Rapid Transit between Barnsley and Doncaster – connecting the only remaining two main urban centres in the SCR which do not have a high-quality public transport link, via the housing and employment growth area in the Dearne Valley.
- Rail station (and station access) improvements across the corridor, including the access to/from the stations and improvements to facilities improved signing and information, accessible bench seating, CCTV and lighting enhancements.
- Connecting the housing and employment growth area in the Dearne Valley to the urban centre of Barnsley by providing improvements for active travel modes.

The Transforming Cities Fund bid will draw on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and the recent appointment of an Active Travel Commissioner to start developing a network of active travel routes, taking advantage of the relatively low commuting distances across the SCR at present.

Officers in Barnsley have worked closely with SCR officers to provide the information required. The work is currently in the modelling phase and the Final Business Case is being drafted for submission in November.

Intercity Rail connectivity and town centre regeneration

The SCR Transport Strategy includes an ambition to achieve intercity rail connectivity direct into Barnsley town centre. It is closely aligned to the regeneration of the town centre and potential platform extensions could support an improved intercity offer. TfN are proposing an extension of a London-Sheffield MML inter-city train to Leeds via Barnsley as part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail. The Town Centre bridge work is included in the Transforming Cities Fund bid (£2.5m).

Opening up low usage or closed rail lines to new services

A Rail re-opening Study was commissioned by SCR in March arising from the BMBC Rail Vision. It looks at the initial feasibility of re-opening a number of freight or disused lines for passenger services. The final report due shortly, then we will be possible to decide whether / which routes to warrant further work to develop a fundable business case.

Leeds-Sheffield Hallam line journey time improvements

SCR officers are working with Barnsley officers and with TfN to secure Leeds-Sheffield Hallam line journey time improvements via their priority line speed improvements schemes.

Northern Powerhouse Rail Dearne Valley station

The SCR Integrated Rail Plan includes a new station in the Dearne Valley on the NPR line that has the potential to be served by HS2 and NPR services, supported by improved road connections between the M1 and A1 along the A635. TfN and SCR will work with Barnsley Council to undertake a study to look at the feasibility of building the station early and what services could potentially operate from the station.

Bus Services in Barnsley

The following activities are taking place to improve bus services in Barnsley:

Improving the frequency of service

Realistically increasing frequency is unlikely as operators are finding that maintaining existing frequencies is a challenge as journey speeds are reducing from 13.10 mph in April 2016 to 12.75 mph in March 2019, and journey times increasing, as consequence of increasing congestion on the network. Maintaining frequencies means that additional vehicles are required, which increases the costs of operation. Operators conclude this is not commercially sustainable as patronage is reducing by circa 6% per annum due to a number of external factors; reduced footfall in our town centres, internet shopping, flexible working, increased car ownership for example.

Improving connectivity between villages

The Barnsley Bus Partnership has worked to ensure that all communities in Barnsley retain a minimum level of service. Whilst it is difficult to improve connectivity due to the challenges mentioned previously, effective use of commercial and tendered services has improved the frequency of some services. For example: between Hoyland – Cortonwood – Wombwell / Barnsley, Hoyland and Sheffield from 60 to 30 minutes and introduced new connections to Meadowhall and Leeds.

Ensuring key local facilities such as GP surgeries, Dentists, Medical Centres, Community Centres, Job Centres are included on bus routes

The Partnership aims to provide services to as many of the key facilities as is possible. However, as pressure on the network continues, it is challenging to provide direct access in all cases. Generally key local facilities can be accessed by interchange and when facilities are relocated the Partnership will endeavour to maintain bus access. Where this cannot be achieved, Community Transport is an alternative option for passengers.

Improving services for those with disabilities e.g. suitable for wheelchair users

All bus services now operate with fully accessible buses, including access ramps and dedicated wheelchair spaces and drivers are provided with training to assist disabled users with their journey. An increasing number of Accessible Bus Stops are available; these provide raised curbs to allow the bus ramp to align with the bus stop and tactile paving to aid partially sighted or blind users to navigate from the stop to the bus safely.