

TRANSPORT BOARD

10th JANUARY 2020

UPDATE ON THE BUS REVIEW

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update to the Transport Board on the progress in undertaking the Mayoral Bus Review, led by Clive Betts MP.

Freedom of Information

The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme

Recommendations

Note the report and consider whether the board will respond to the panel's formal invitation for written evidence

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The bus review has progressed swiftly since it was commissioned in March this year (despite some delay caused by political events) and has examined the challenges in the current bus transport system and opportunities for improvement.

This paper summarises:

- The process for gathering evidence
- Emerging findings
- Next steps

2. Proposal and justification

2.1 Process for gathering evidence

The review has taken a multi-faceted approach gathering evidence to ensure a rich and diverse evidence base. Key lines of enquiry were determined before fieldwork began to ensure the review would provide the Sheffield City Region Mayor with an independent assessment of:

- The current condition of the commercial bus and community transport sector in South Yorkshire, including the reasons for the decline in both registered bus services and bus passenger numbers;
 - The social, environmental and economic impacts of this decline in bus services and passenger numbers; and
 - The steps which should be taken to ensure commercial bus and community transport services meet the needs of South Yorkshire residents.
- 2.2** The panel commissioned baseline research from Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Regional and Economic Social Research and the Open Data Institute Leeds comprising of both qualitative research (a literature review) and quantitative data analysis. The data analysis will provide a regionally focused assessment of bus service frequency and reliability (based on bus operator real time data) set against social and economic context.
- 2.3** The research will produce a set of recommendations for short, medium- and long-term bus network improvement that range from those that apply directly to the bus sector (such as, contactless ticketing technology) to allied policy areas and their indirect impact on bus transportation. For example, climate change, spatial and economic development.
- 2.4** At the heart of this has been public consultation to ensure a wide range of views inform the review's findings and recommendations.

Survey

A public survey was launched in May and has received over 6,600 responses. This has provided the review with useful intelligence on the attitudes of bus users but also crucially non-bus users about the regional bus network.

Stakeholder engagement

We have conducted a significant amount of stakeholder engagement as a means of gathering evidence for the review. This has included visits to other bus companies in England, meetings with representative organisations and holding community focus group sessions. The latter has been a good way of extending the reach of our consultation beyond 'the usual suspects'.

Call for evidence

In July the panel invited written submissions from people and organisations who would be able to provide more formal evidence and written responses to the review's key lines of enquiry. Responders (including SYPTE, the bus operators, Transport for London and unions) were then invited to discuss their submission in more detail at an oral evidence session held on Friday 11th October.

- 2.5** The panel have undertaken several visits to towns and cities to examine different models of bus operation and to consider what lessons could be learned from places where bus systems are in the same state of decline as in South Yorkshire. In particular, the panel have heard about innovative ways to increase bus patronage, encourage modal shift, and enhance bus partnerships so that they are better integrated with local systems.

2.6 *Emerging findings*

The review was commissioned by the Mayor to examine all aspects of South Yorkshire's bus system with a view to identifying recommendations for improvement that will both increase patronage and support sustainability and stability of the bus transport sector. While this included consideration of new opportunities and powers provided by the Bus Services

Act 2017, the panel deliberately wanted to comprehensively consider the reasons behind falling patronage before arriving at a recommendation on governance models.

2.7 Four key challenges for the bus system in South Yorkshire have emerged through the evidence gathered:

1. **The network faces significant bus reliability and frequency challenges** which damage the quality service received by passengers and disincentivises new customers
2. In some parts of South Yorkshire, particularly more rural and isolated communities, there is **inadequate connectivity between bus routes and with other modes of transport**
3. From a customer perspective, **the system is overly complicated and difficult to navigate**. This includes inconsistent provision of information, complex ticketing and fare structures, route information and the management of service changes.
4. **There is an inconsistent quality of network** between the different areas including quality of vehicles, provision of information and standard of infrastructure.

2.8 *Next steps*

- Early January 2020 - panel are due to meet with the Mayor to discuss emerging findings
- January 2020 – testing findings with stakeholders including local authorities
- March 2020 – report submitted to the Mayor and shared with the Combined Authority

3. Implications

3.1 Financial

There are no financial implications from this paper/presentation

3.2 Legal

There are no financial implications from this paper/presentation

3.3 Risk Management

There are no risk management issues from this paper/presentation

3.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

An equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the options analysis that will inform the recommendations made by the commission. The evidence base will also consider the needs of minority passenger groups such as the elderly or the economic disadvantaged.

4. Appendices/Annexes

4.1 None

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: