

MCA's agreed response to the Bus Review

Principles

These principles set out a platform upon which further work will be undertaken to drive improvements on the bus network. They are distilled from the findings of the Review to identify at a high level, the types of measures that need to be considered if we are to deliver meaningful improvement to our bus system

1. Business as usual is not an option
2. More public and private investment is needed
3. We need to make buses a more attractive option for people
4. New funding sources are required
5. We need to set out what a good integrated bus network looks like
6. We need to change the way we make decisions

7-point plan

To deliver upon these 6 principles, the following 7-point plan is proposed, which will guide the MCAs work over the coming months

- 1 **Governance:** Begin the process for integrating the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYLTE) fully within the Sheffield City Region MCA.

Update:

A significant amount of work has been undertaken to progress the integration of the SYLTE with the MCA Executive. This includes:

- a) A draft integration plan agreed by the MCA in September 2020 which includes constitutional changes and amendment of financial regulations. Maximising pre-legislative dissolution and alignment of the MCA and SYLTE constitutional and financial regulations
 - b) Commissioning an external, independent specialist to scrutinise the draft plan to ensure the process and plan for integration is fully assured as robust and comprehensive
 - c) Alignment of financial and business planning, with the appointment of a single Director of Finance
 - d) Single HR support – with all new recruitments being made under the employment of the MCA Executive
- 2 **Route Analysis:** Analyse the South Yorkshire bus network to set out a 'whole system' approach that ensures buses run where people want to go both now and, in the future, along with achieving better integration with other modes. This will take a bottom up approach, focussing on each Local Authority area and the need for integrated routes across South Yorkshire. The analysis will look at the volume, role and timings of bus routes, including patronage by route, speed of journey and mode integration. The route analysis will identify the service needed by geographical area, before identifying the gap between where are now compared to where we would like to be and the cost of delivery.
 - 3 **Quality Analysis:** Identify the investment and infrastructure required to improve the quality of service/experience for passengers.
 - 4 **Environmental Analysis:** Identify the investment and infrastructure required to meet the MCAs net zero commitments.

Update:

We are in the process of commissioning these three substantial pieces of analysis, with a successful candidate about to be appointed to undertake the route analysis work. [There

may be an update on this by the time of the meeting.] These pieces of analysis will shape future decision making about bus improvement – for example what a good network looks like, what operating model is best suited to the region and what our customer service offer to passengers should be. It is likely net zero will feature heavily in the Government's plans for bus recovery (and subsequent funding offers).

- 5 **Pricing Analysis:** Consider the cost of using the regions bus services to develop a new pricing and ticketing framework to drive patronage and make it affordable, flexible and attractive. This will include a review of concessions to ensure they meet passenger needs.
- 6 **Model Evaluation:** Work through the legal and financial implications of changing our current bus service delivery model using the powers available in the Bus Services Act 2017. This will include consideration of Enhanced Partnerships, either across South Yorkshire or in specific local authorities. It will also consider the long term legal and financial options for other models such as franchising.
- 7 **Cost Model:** A financial planning exercise working with Local Authorities and bus operators to produce a new cost model to achieve the objectives set out in the above 7-point plan

Update:

These pieces of analysis will be commissioned at the earliest opportunity this year.

No detailed work has been undertaken to investigate process of Enhanced Partnership and franchising in South Yorkshire due to the impact of COVID.

It is highly likely that forthcoming Government policy changes (which have been delayed since Autumn 2020) will increase the pressure on the MCA to make an indicative decision about future operating models. It has been crucial to allow Government's thinking to play out fully before deciding on a course of action.

Initial conversations with local authorities have been started as part of the partnership refresh work and a paper is being prepared to go to the MCA to ask for a steer on policy direction