

TRANSPORT BOARD

19th JULY 2019

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

Thematic Board Papers and any appendices will be made available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme. This scheme commits the Authority to make information about how decisions are made available to the public as part of its normal business activities.

Recommendations

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This report provides the Transport Board with an overview of the South Yorkshire Bus Review and an update on progress. Specifically, the paper provides information on the approach to the review including evidence collation and key lines of enquiry, and an indicative timeline for the review.

2. Proposal and justification

- 2.1** In England, bus services were deregulated 1986 following the introduction of the 1985 Transport Act. Over the last 25 years, annual bus journeys per person (in cities outside London) have fallen by 40%. This trend of declining patronage is replicated in South Yorkshire, although 82% of all public transport journeys in South Yorkshire are still made by bus.
- 2.2** Within South Yorkshire, bus services are operated commercially under bus partnership arrangements for each of the four local authority areas. These arrangements have been introduced progressively between 2012 and 2017. The partnership model means decisions are taken in consultation with the operators, SYPTE and Local Authorities, as well as the public where appropriate. This does not extend to decisions on setting fares and operators are required to retain their own range of products.

- 2.3** In 2017, the Government introduced the Bus Services Act giving Mayoral Combined Authorities the choice to access bus devolution powers, enter into Enhanced Partnerships or upgrade existing statutory quality partnerships to advanced quality partnerships.
- 2.4** There is a need to identify and understand the underlying reasons for declining bus patronage in our region, to then identify the appropriate models of bus operation that can help the City Region achieve its wider transport aspirations. As part of his manifesto and *Vision for Transport*, Mayor Dan Jarvis has asked Clive Betts MP to chair an independent commission reviewing the provision of bus services across South Yorkshire with a view to bringing forward evidenced, practical, ambitious recommendations for improvements to encourage patronage, improve viability and ensure the bus system is fit for the 21st century.
- 2.5** The Chair has personally appointed a balanced panel of commissioners to support him in carrying out the review and who are contributing a range of thinking and insight from a variety of perspectives. Stakeholders, ranging from bus operators to user groups, are being engaged but deliberately not directly represented on the panel. The commissioners appointed by the Chair to sit on the panel are:
- Kristine Beuret – Director of Social Research Associates
 - Stephen Joseph – former CEO of *Campaign for Better Transport*
 - Martin Mayer – former bus driver and Unite union representative
 - Peter Kennan – private sector representative on the LEP board (transport lead)
 - Lily Currie – *Sheffield Hallam University student*, studying Environmental Studies
- 2.6** The panel have committed to meet monthly and its role is to oversee development of the evidence base, conduct fieldwork visits and interview stakeholders. The following thematic areas will be discussed by the panel at forthcoming meetings:
- Lessons learned from other areas
 - Congestion, green journeys and air quality
 - Commercial operation of a bus system fit for the 21st Century
- 2.7** The panel is following a similar approach to Select Committee inquiries in respect of formally invite key stakeholders (including local authorities, SYPTA and the bus operators) to submit written evidence ahead of oral public evidence sessions over the Summer where stakeholders will be questioned in more detail.
- 2.8** Terms of Reference for the review have been agreed between the Mayor, the Chair and the panel of commissioners (see Appendix A) and the panel have agreed the following key lines of enquiry:
- Trends in bus use, factors contributing to these trends how to increase bus patronage - generally as well as in relation to different demographic groups including young people, the elderly, minority ethnic groups; key workers; those on low incomes, those with mobility issues;
 - How to improve provision for potentially isolated residents and communities;
 - How to improve 'quality' of services with an emphasis on the bus user experience;
 - The relationship between the bus system and other modes of transport and travel such as the tram network and active travel;

- The implementation of bus priority measures by local leaders in South Yorkshire;
- The environmental impact that buses can have on congestion, pollution and air quality;
- The commercial operation of the bus sector including the responsibilities of bus operators, strategic planning and regulatory matters;
- Adequacy of funding and best approaches to securing future investment in the sector and ensuring sustainability; and
- What can be learnt from other towns, cities and/or city regions about any of the review's key lines of enquiry.

The review will take a strategic long-term perspective of services but is unlikely to make recommendations on individual routes.

2.9 The review includes a public call for evidence whereby existing and non-bus users and community groups have been invited to submit their views about existing bus service provision and/or improvements that they would like to be made. A survey, which was published online (on the SCR website) in May, has so far received over 2500 responses from individuals and representative groups. Public focus groups will also be held by councillors, local authorities and the Chambers of Commerce; with a focus on eliciting the views of those people who don't currently use bus transport. Additionally, the Review's Secretariat is working with local authorities to make use of existing public consultation mechanisms so as not to duplicate efforts and make it easier for the public to get involved.

2.10 The indicative timeline for the review is as follows:

- *June – October*: evidence base development will take place– including procurement of external organisation to undertake research and analysis
- *June – September*: stakeholder engagement including public call for evidence, fieldwork, focus groups and formal evidence sessions
- *September & October*: analysis and prioritisation of findings including sharing interim findings with the Mayor
- *November – January*: Draft report including recommendations
- *January 2020*: submit final report to the Mayor and Combined Authority

3. Implications

3.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications from this paper.

3.2 Legal

There are no direct legal implications from this paper, although the recommendations of the review will need to be considered within the context of the powers afforded to the Mayor under the 2017 Bus Services Act.

3.3 Risk Management

There is a risk that the public and bus operators perceive the review as having a pre-determined outcome. This is addressed as part of the communications and stakeholder engagement campaigns, and a response is outlined in the frequently asked questions document (Annex B).

4.4 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.

5. Appendices/Annexes

- 5.1 Annex A: Review Terms of Reference
- Annex B: Frequently Asked Questions

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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: