

MINUTES



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SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

Wednesday 28 July 2021

PRESENT:

J. Hoare	(Chair)
N. Spetch	(Vice Chair/Rotherham TUG)
D Wrottesley	(Hope Valley Rail User Group)
I. Jenkinson	(Sheffield TUG/Member of the public)
F. Postlethwaite	(BTUG member)
Cllr. A. Khayum	(Sheffield City Council)

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GUESTS:

R. Cowling	(SYPTe)
T. Taylor	(SYPTe)
C. Sadler	(SYPTe)
N. Wragg	(Supertram)
L. Maloney	(Northern)
D. Ellis	(Stagecoach)
A. Bray	(CrossCountry)

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1. OPEN AND WELCOME

The meeting was opened, and all welcomed to another on-line meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

John Brightmore gave his apologies.

3. FORWARD PLANNER

Supertram renewal progress

TT advised that DfT asked SYPTe to rework the outline business case for Supertram renewal following the impact of the pandemic. We're currently working through various appointments including financial and engineering advisers and plan to submit a new Outline Business Case (OBC) next calendar year.

TT informed the group about a DfT City Regions Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). There is uncertainty regarding the amount of funding for Supertram renewal. TT advised the group of options considered for the

renewal scheme including replacement or refurbishment of the fleet dependent on funding.

Q: JH asked 'Will a delay in renewal have an effect on the network?'

A: TT said it has always been planned that the renewal would begin at the end of the concession. Delays with asset renewal and any problems brought about by operating an ageing asset may lead to operational issues. The work remains necessary though the decision to tie the start of the work to the end of the concession was purely a practical one and not based on a specific requirement to do so.

A discussion was held around the Tramlines event and curtailed tram operation, as a direct result of high numbers of Test and Trace self-isolation of Supertram staff, which meant no trams operated to beyond Shalesmoor after around 8/9pm over the weekend. This was a joint decision by Supertram, Tramlines and SYPTTE for the safety of everyone.

Q: DW asked 'Who should provide supervision of tram stops after the Tramlines festival?'

A: TT said the queuing system falls under the responsibility of the event organiser. Tramlines usually use a "holding pen" style system which was planned to be in use this time.

Q: NS said Northern's train issues will have compounded issues at Tramlines and asked 'How will the renewal plan would work with the National Bus strategy plans to complement bus services to provide a single public transport product?'

A: TT said this was an important point to be used within SYPTTE's OBC. The tram by its nature competes with bus services, and more recently heavy rail with the addition of the Tram Train, so it is important that it is considered alongside any proposals and how this relates to our plans in response to the National Bus Strategy.

4. NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY, BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLANS, ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP AND POST-COVID FUNDING

TT reminded the group of the Government's "Bus Back Better" National Bus Strategy launched in March this year and the requirements for the combined authorities; to declare the intention to pursue an Enhanced Partnership or Franchising or both.

TT told the group that South Yorkshire MCA had decided to pursue an Enhanced Partnership. A Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) needs to be submitted by October to secure funding and must be reviewed annually. DfT will award higher levels of funding to city regions with more ambitious plans. This doesn't prevent us from pursuing a franchising model in the future, but the benefits of an Enhanced Partnership come about quicker

than franchising, which can take years, and allows time for the city region to consider other options.

The National Bus Strategy clearly sets out requirements for the city regions and operators to demonstrate in terms of substantial and extensive bus priority measures; simple, transparent and affordable fares; and reducing vehicle emissions by way of a fleet renewal programme, expecting operators replace petrol and diesel fleets with zero-emissions fleets.

TT advised that CBSSG funding will come to an end at the end of August.

Q: NS said, in the Bus Strategy document, there is a graph showing the inflation of bus fare in comparison to rail fares. He said fares need to halve to ensure they are practical and competitive and can reach the inflation rate.

A: TT said there are a number of factors that people will consider when choosing a private vehicle over public transport, including the cost of parking. Bus priority measures may also encourage more car owners to take the bus if this journey is quicker and cheaper than travelling by car. Halving fares may not be the answer as in the current climate this could lead to a significant shortfall in bus operating costs.

Q: FP said the lack of reliability and regularity of public transport services is not encouraging car drivers to choose public transport. An Enhanced Partnership does not go far enough to consider the needs of bus users, especially for those needing socially necessary services, with regards to timetabling and routes so franchising needs to be considered sooner. A recent review ([link here](#)) said Enhanced Partnerships do not go far enough to address inequalities in service and there needs to be more done to open up the possibility of public ownership in the future.

A: TT said franchising isn't off the table and remains an option to be considered by the MCA. He said the options afforded by franchising vs. enhanced partnerships aren't binary and depends on how far a transport authority decides to take its new powers in each instance. It is important the User Groups are engaged with and input to the BSIP process.

Action: TT to liaise with the Mayor and Stephen Edwards to determine the best way of engaging Transport User Groups in the EP developments

5. UPDATE FROM OPERATORS

Bus

DE advised Stagecoach services are generally running at about 60% of pre-Covid passenger levels, and punctuality is slightly improved due to fewer cars on the road. DE said normal frequencies will be reintroduced to routes in Sheffield at the end of August/beginning of September, and minor timetable amends will occur at the same time, however there aren't any upcoming major changes.

DE advised the group of the 25% discount from the Sheffield City Region on TravelMaster products from 2 August to 27 September. TT reminded the group of the MCA's 18-21 concession, launched in June. He said on top of this, the MCA wanted to provide a boost to the local economy as restrictions ease so has agreed to provide a discount on all adult TravelMaster products including daily, weekly, monthly and annual tickets. The discount makes it cheaper to buy a TravelMaster ticket than a single operator ticket.

Q: NS said this is the first he had heard of the TravelMaster discount, suggesting it should be better publicised.

A: TT said the discount was only approved two days prior so there hasn't been much time to publicise this campaign. SYPT's public transport recovery campaign is going to be the vehicle to advertise this discount.

Q: FP asked if the discount only applied to single operator tickets as she only needed the ticket for travel before 9:30.

A: TT said the discount only applied to adult TravelMaster products which, as a minimum, only sell day tickets and no singles fares. A new TravelMaster Flexi5 ticket has also been introduced offering five journeys for the price of four within a 28-day period. With the 25% discount the flexi5 will provide five journeys for the price of three.

Q: IJ asked how ticket machines distinguish between the tickets on a TravelMaster smartcard.

A: TT said it may be easiest to have separate smartcards but said he will take this up with TravelMaster.

Post meeting note: TT has liaised with TravelMaster and responded directly to IJ.

It was noted that a representative from First did not attend the meeting.

Tram

NW had to leave the meeting before he was able to provide an update. TT advised the group of the derailment of a tram on 23 June at Hyde Park. The tram concerned has hit by a skip lorry/HGV and been significantly damaged. An investigation by SYP is underway. The issue will also be picked up with Sheffield City Council to review the traffic situation at accident hotspot junctions such as this.

Train

AB advised CrossCountry is seeing a week-on-week increase in passenger numbers, mostly leisure, with around 40% pre-Covid level of patronage. CrossCountry is beginning to ease social distancing on services to allow for more capacity, including removing stickers from seats. A marketing campaign commencing soon to encourage people to return to rail. Community Rail projects are starting to return and CrossCountry is happy to support these.

The group were reminded of the East Coast Mainline may consultation, which closes on Monday 2 August. Details are available at <https://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/travel-updates-information/consultation-may-2022>.

Q: DW asked if CrossCountry had a standard path on its Reading to Newcastle journey.

A: AB said he would return to DW with this information.

Action: AB to investigate and feedback at the next meeting

LM said Northern was also seeing a strong uptake on leisure travel. Ongoing issues with ticket machines are still affecting customers following a software upgrade issue but this is hoped to be resolved shortly. Northern services, particularly in Sheffield, had been adversely affected by employees having to isolate in relation to Test and Trace.

TT advised Northern are seeing roughly 55% of pre-Covid patronage across the network, with a large number of staff members having to isolate. The changes to the isolation rules are not expected to apply to train drivers and crew, as it is understood this only applies to system critical employees such as signallers.

Q: DW asked for an update on the Hope Valley consultation

A: LM said she would take this away and feedback at the next meeting.

Action: LM to liaise with Richard Isaac / Pete Myers and provide a response.

Q: NS said he was disappointed to see a total loss of rail service on the Sheffield to Lincoln line over the past few weekends as this route is exclusively served by Northern. However, services such as to Nottingham remained despite being operated by multiple operators.

A: LM offered her apologies for this issue and said it is hoped this issue can be resolved in coming weeks. TT stated the impact on services is possibly down to replacement drivers not being trained for affected routes.

6. MEMBERS ITEMS/RAISED BY OTHER USER GROUPS

BTUG:

- *Franchising vs Enhanced Partnership*

This was covered in Item 4; however, FP raised that formal discussion should be taking place involving passenger groups after the intention to operate an Enhanced Partnership is published. FP said a proper forum of consultation on such matters should be established.

TT said User Groups provide the ideal audience to be involved in the scheme development and will determine the best format to include them in and engagement processes with MCA colleagues.

- *Second bus review following Betts review*
This was covered in Item 4.

DTUG:

- *Rail access to Doncaster Sheffield Airport following points made by planning inspector at the inquiry*
Action: RC to determine the nature of the question and feedback to the individual who raised it and provide an update at the next meeting.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was raised

12. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 20 October 2021, 10.30am