

Report of West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Report to Scrutiny Board (City Development)

Date: 12 October 2016

Subject: Inquiry into Bus Service Provision

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The Scrutiny Board at its meeting on the 17th of June 2015 resolved to undertake an inquiry to consider bus service provision in Leeds District. Since the first Leeds Scrutiny Board meeting in January 2016, the Board has met four times (January, February, March and April 2016) regarding the bus service provision inquiry. The Scrutiny Board meetings have covered a range of topics and viewpoints from a series of organisations involved in the bus system.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Board:
 - Note the progress of the ongoing consultation with members of the public and stakeholders on the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy
 - Consider the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy and contribute to the consultation
 - Note and consider the information provided regarding the Bus Services Bill
 - Support the passage of the Bus Services Bill through Parliament and endorse the points made by WYCA Transport Committee members about the Bill
 - Determine if further scrutiny will be required to ensure careful consideration is given by WYCA and LCC regarding how to deliver the Bus Strategy.

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an update on the consultation into the West Yorkshire Bus and Transport Strategies
- Provide an opportunity for the Scrutiny Board to contribute to the consultation.
- Set out the latest position regarding Bus Services Bill
- Provide a summary of the evidence presented to the Scrutiny Board by WYCA, Bus Operators and other stakeholders.

2 Background information

2.1 Since January 2016, the Scrutiny Board (City Development) has been undertaking an Inquiry into the bus service provision in Leeds. The Scrutiny Board meetings have covered a range of topics and viewpoints from a series of organisations involved in the bus system.

2.2 In January 2016, the Scrutiny Board covered the context and background to bus industry including:

- Overview of Bus Services and the economy
- De-regulation and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- Key Achievements over the last decade
- Role of the Highway Authority & WYCA in the Bus System

2.3 In February 2016, the Scrutiny Board considered the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Bus Strategy approach and associated public consultation programme. It was also presented with information around the existing legal frameworks and as well as expectations from the Buses Bill, which was emerging as a new option at the time.

2.4 In March 2016 key stakeholders including Transport Focus, Chamber of Commerce and Unite were invited provided to outline their perspective on the bus system in Leeds.

2.5 In April 2016 a range of bus operators were invited to present their perspectives, including:

- Existing Bus Operators: First West Yorkshire, Arriva, Transdev as well as the umbrella organisation ABOWY (Association of Bus Operators in West Yorkshire)
- Other Bus Operators: Tower Transit and HCT

3 Main issues

Transport and Bus Strategy Update

- 3.6 As outlined at the February 2016 scrutiny meeting, West Yorkshire Combined Authority is producing the new, 20-year West Yorkshire Transport and Bus strategies, in partnership with district councils and bus operators First West Yorkshire, Arriva and Transdev.
- 3.7 The new strategies will support the recently updated Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan's ('SEP') targets of creating an additional 35,700 jobs for local people over the next 20 years, and growing the City Region economy at a faster rate than the national average. The SEP wants 'good growth' where business competitiveness, productivity and profits go hand in hand with access to good jobs, earnings and opportunities for all residents and where the environment and people's health are highly valued.
- 3.8 The West Yorkshire Transport Strategy sets out how a modern, effective and integrated transport system can help people make the journeys they need to for jobs, education and leisure. It is intended that the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy would become West Yorkshire's 'Local Transport Plan' document. A copy of the Transport Strategy summary is included in Appendix 1.
- 3.9 Bus is an integral element of the broader West Yorkshire Transport Strategy and the Leeds City Region SEP. As a result, our more detailed strategy for development of bus, as part of the wider West Yorkshire Transport Strategy is identified in the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy. The Bus Strategy is a 'daughter document' to the broader Transport Strategy and a copy is attached in Appendix 2.
- 3.10 For bus, the goal is to create the best system in Europe, where catching the bus in West Yorkshire is an attractive and natural choice for everyone. Delivering this step change is fundamental to helping to realise the ambitious economic growth targets for West Yorkshire and the City Region. To realise this, the vision for the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy is:
- To create a modern, integrated and innovative bus system which puts customer first and contributes to the delivery of West Yorkshire's economic, environmental and quality of life ambitions as set out in the Strategic Economic Plan and the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy*
- 3.11 From this vision, the following objectives have been defined:
- To enable economic growth in West Yorkshire by improving connectivity to areas of economic opportunity;
 - To realise environmental aspirations, including significantly reducing local emissions; and
 - To support local communities by providing access to health services, education and employment, leisure and retail destinations.
- 3.12 To deliver growth and to resolve the challenges that currently exist in the industry, the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy proposes a blend of coordinated policies:

- To provide consistent and excellent customer services across the bus system.
- To provide modern, coherent and integrated bus services
- To provide integrated, simple and affordable bus fares for all
- To provide easily accessible and reliable travel information
- To present the bus system as a single network
- To provide a modern bus system which contributes to improved air quality.

3.13 In delivering these policies, the strategy must put the needs of the customer first. In addition it must, create a safe and secure environment for all, be affordable and support the long-term financial sustainability of the West Yorkshire bus system.

3.14 The ambition is to target 25% patronage growth from 2016 levels, over the next 10 years, but given the level of economic growth forecast, it is not infeasible to target even higher levels of patronage growth.

3.15 Since the February Scrutiny Board, the three month public and stakeholder consultation on the Transport and Bus Strategies started on 18 July 2016 and is anticipated to end on Friday 21 October 2016.

3.16 The timing of the Scrutiny Board inquiry presents an opportunity to respond to the consultation, by considering the core questions of the consultation:

- The Bus Strategy identifies a range of problems associated with the bus system. How far do you agree or disagree with these customer focused problems?
- The Bus Strategy sets out vision, objectives and critical success factors for the Bus System. How far do you agree or disagree with the vision, objectives and critical success factors?
- The Bus Strategy sets out the detailed policy proposals which WYCA believes will enable the vision and objectives to be realised. How far do you agree or disagree with these policy proposals?

3.17 By mid-September, almost 4,000 people had already taken part in the consultation. Almost 80 drop-in sessions are being held across West Yorkshire. Of the completed responses to the Bus Strategy questionnaire, the responses by district is provided below:

Bradford	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds	Wakefield
16%	16%	20%	41%	8%

3.18 Overall there are 22 drop in events specifically around the consultation taking place across in Leeds District, with over 80 planned in total across West Yorkshire. In addition to this, a series of specific workshops have been held with specific groups in Leeds, including with health and wellbeing groups, education groups, equalities groups, as well as other special interest groups such as young people forums and Leeds Millennials. The Leeds 'conversation' has also held a

series of events where the Transport and Bus Strategies have also been discussed.

3.19 This is one of our largest ever programmes of consultation events across West Yorkshire, with 94% of the population of West Yorkshire able to get to an event by public transport within 30 minutes. Promotion of the consultation has included:

- All Parish / Town Council Clerks have been made aware of the consultation through a series of emails and newsletters.
- All councillors in West Yorkshire are emailed weekly about consultation and the upcoming events.
- There is a weekly press release and many of the events have been picked up in the local press.
- Leeds council communications team and the bus operators have actively helped to promote events through social media.
- Materials about the consultation have been distributed at a range of locations including at Leeds Railway Station and at Leeds Bus Station.
- We are using social media to target Leeds car drivers commuters through promoted and boosted posts on Facebook
- We have sent out a range of newsletters and emails inviting them a wide range of stakeholder groups, businesses, community associations to take part in the consultation
- Bus operators have placed posters about the consultation on their buses and posters are also on local train services. Posters have been placed at targeted shelters, targeting areas where we have had a low responses to date
- Regular updates and reminders on when and where the drop-in sessions are taking place continue to be posted on social media. Twitter: @yrtravelyrsay and @WestYorkshireCA Facebook: Yourtravelyoursay as well as at www.yourtravelyoursay.co.uk. Additional targeted promotion of the consultation via social media has taken place for young people, motorists and Wakefield residents (where response rates have been lower).

3.20 Once the consultation closes, a full independent report analysing all the results will be produced. Following which, the strategies will be updated to reflect comments made. The updated strategies will subsequently brought back to WYCA Transport Committee for review, endorsement and adoption.

Bus Services Bill

3.21 The Bus Services Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on Thursday 19 May 2016. This Bill seeks to “expand the range of tools available” to directly elected mayors and local transport authorities (LTAs) in areas in England outside of London to improve local bus services. The Government has said that the Bill would:

- Give elected mayors and LTAs “the power to improve bus services for the people who use them”.
- Provide directly elected mayors with “London-style powers to franchise local services”.
- Make available to app developers data about routes, fares and times across the country to give “passengers better information about how to make the most of local bus services”.

The Department for Transport has produced a document which provides an overview of the Buses Bill. This is attached in Appendix 3.

3.22 The Bill makes provision in the following areas:

- Partnerships (clauses 1 to 3 and 9 to 15)
- Bus franchising (clauses 4 to 6)
- Ticketing improvements (clauses 7 to 8)
- Bus registration and open data (clauses 16 to 20)

3.23 It is an enabling bill and extends to England and Wales, although it is intended to apply only to areas in England outside of London. The Explanatory Notes state that the “Government would not mandate which approach is to be taken, encouraging LTAs to pursue the most suitable solution for their area”. Several clauses in the Bill include provisions that would allow the Secretary of State to make regulations or guidance. The Government has confirmed that while the Bill is progressing through Parliament it will consult on, and aim to finalise, any such draft regulations and guidance.

3.24 Second reading (a general debate on all aspects of the Bill) took place on Wednesday 8 June 2016. Committee stage (a line by line examination of the Bill) took place over three days: Wednesday 29 June, Monday 4 July and Wednesday 20 July 2016. The latest version of the Bill, as amended in committee, was published on 20 July 2016.¹ The Report Stage, giving all members of the Lords a further opportunity to examine and make amendments to the Bill, will be on Wednesday 12 October 2016.

3.25 In addition, DfT are continuing discussions with stakeholders including WYCA in order to inform the detailed content of the regulations and guidance associated with the Bill, which have included a series of workshops and meetings coordinated through Urban Transport Group (UTG²) at DfT’s offices. It is still the DfT’s intention to publish draft regulations and guidance, for formal consultation, in the autumn.

3.26 DfT are still anticipating the Bill to receive Royal Assent in spring 2017, so that the powers will be available to the first tranche of Mayoral Combined Authorities.

3.27 Lead WYCA Transport Committee members have written to all Leeds City Region MPs to set out their broad support for the Bill but that one area of detail where we share the concerns of many parties is that all Transport Authorities should have equal access to franchise powers. In addition, during the course of the passage of the Bill that additional requirements or tests are not added to the legislation. In this regard it is important to recognise that two previous pieces of legislation (the 2000 Transport Act and the 2008 Local Transport Act) intended to provide powers for transport authorities outside London to franchise bus services proved unworkable in practice because the processes they contained were disproportionate, convoluted and restrictive. A copy of the letter is included in Appendix 4.

¹ http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2016-2017/0058/lbill_2016-20170058_en_1.htm

² The Urban Transport Group brings together and promotes the interests of Britain’s largest urban areas on transport. Full members are Transport for West Midlands, Merseytravel (Merseyside), North East Combined Authority, South Yorkshire PTE (Sheffield City Region), Transport for Greater Manchester, Transport for London, West Yorkshire Combined Authority. UTG also have associate members which are Bristol and the West of England Partnership, Nottingham City Council and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport.

- 3.28 The Local Government Association produced a briefing on the 8th of June which sets out their views on the draft Bill. This is attached in Appendix 5.

Bus Services Bill – Transport Select Committee

- 3.29 In July 2016 the Transport Select Committee announced the launched an Inquiry on the Bus Services Bill. The Transport Committee are anticipated to produce a short report on the Bill to inform the specification of the Bill prior to Royal Assent. The Committee is interested in the extent to which legislation is required in this area, and if so, whether the current Bill addresses the correct issues. The Committee requested evidence on a range of themes, including:

- How Advanced Quality Partnerships and Enhanced Partnerships are likely to contribute to the Government's aims of improving services for passengers and enabling a successful commercial sector
- The appropriateness of limiting the automatic right to introduce franchising to combined authorities with elected mayors
- The likely effect of franchising on small and medium operators
- The effectiveness of the measures relating to open data and how these could improve the accessibility of bus transport
- The basis for a prohibition on new municipal bus companies delivering bus services, particularly in non-franchised areas
- Measures in the Bill relating to ticketing schemes and new technologies

- 3.30 Responses were submitted by a range of organisations, including bus operators and Local Transport Authorities. WYCA worked with the Urban Transport Group in producing a response to the Inquiry, which took place on 12 September 2016.³ Appendix 6 is the written consultation response of the Urban Transport Group to the Select Committee.

- 3.31 The select committee report will be available in the coming months, to inform the Bill as it passes through parliament.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 WYCA have taken a phased approach to the development of the Bus strategy with both public and stakeholder consultation taking place over the next 6 months with the aim to produce a 'WY Bus Strategy Policy Document' adopted by WYCA by April 2017.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.2 WYCA will be responsible for ensuring compliance with Equality and Diversity requirements of the Bus Strategy.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

³ Reports and transcripts of the sessions can be accessed by following link: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/bus-services-bill-16-17/>

4.3.3 This inquiry will support objectives as defined in The Vision for Leeds 2011 – 2030 and the Best Council Plan 2015-20.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.4 This report has no specific resource and value for money implications

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.5 This report has no specific legal or access to information implications

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.6 This report has no risk management implications. Processes for risk and project management form part of the various projects related to the bus strategy being progressed by Leeds City Council and WYCA.

5 Conclusions

5.7 Evidence presented and matters raised during the course of the Scrutiny Inquiry, can be summarised as follows:

- Buses are vital to West Yorkshire, its people, its business and its economy. Each week people in West Yorkshire make over 3.5 million journeys on local bus services, making them the most highly used form of public transport in our area. An improved bus system is vital to achieve the ambitious levels of economic growth we have set for West Yorkshire and the City Region.
- Significant improvements are needed to the bus system and the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and a series of policy proposals to address the problems.
- Through customer feedback and existing surveys, a range of problems have been identified to exist for customers, including:
 - Buses not running to time
 - Sometimes buses not turning up
 - Long and unreliable journey times on the bus
 - A confusing network of bus routes are confusing, and it not being clear which bus to catch
 - Bus fares are expensive and it is unclear what is the right ticket or pass to get at the cheapest price
 - Travelling by bus sometimes isn't a pleasant experience
 - Bus information not being easy to get or easy to understand
 - It can be unclear who is responsible for the buses, or who to contact / complain to when things go wrong
 - Many of the buses are old
 - The exhaust emissions from buses are often harmful
- The current public and stakeholder consultation is testing whether these are the key problems affecting bus services and whether the policy proposals will address these problems.

- The Bus Services Bill provides a ‘once in a generation’ opportunity to enable bus services to be improved, however:
 - All LTAs should have access to all available powers, including a simpler route to franchising; and
 - During the course of the passage of the Bill through parliament, additional requirements or tests should not be added to the legislation which would make the legislation unworkable (as has been the case with previous bus legislation).
- Following the conclusion of the consultation, WYCA with support from LCC and bus operators will need to carefully consider how to deliver the Bus Strategy, including the legal options available to delivery of the strategy through the Bus Services Bill.

6 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Board:

- Note the progress of the ongoing consultation with members of the public and stakeholders on the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy
- Consider the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy and contribute to the consultation
- Note and consider the information provided regarding the Bus Services Bill
- Support the passage of the Bus Services Bill through Parliament and endorse the points made by WYCA Transport Committee members about the Bill
- Determine if further scrutiny will be required to ensure careful consideration is given by WYCA and LCC regarding how to deliver the Bus Strategy.

7 Background documents

None

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 – West Yorkshire Transport Strategy Summary

Appendix 2 – West Yorkshire Bus Strategy Summary

Appendix 3 - The Bus Services Bill an Overview, Department for Transport

Appendix 4 – Letter from WYCA Transport Committee to MPs regarding the Bus Services Bill

Appendix 5 - Local Government Association briefing note on Bus Services Bill

Appendix 6 - UTG response to the Transport Select Committee