

Connecting Leeds - Expert Advisory Panel

Progress to date (July 2018)

Summary position: The Connecting Leeds Expert Advisory Panel has worked closely with the City Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and transport partners to draw in new insights and focus on the programmes and transport pipeline for the city. It has also considered how these fit with and support the wider aims of the Council and the Combined Authority particularly around sustainable growth and the diverse accessibility of communities and businesses in Leeds.

The Panel has generally found these programmes to be soundly based and reflective of the evolving focus of the transport strategy and to be fit for the transformational purposes for which they are intended. The Panel has recognised and advised senior elected members and officers on key risks, especially those around the financial profiling and scheme delivery within the very tight timescales of March 2021 and has indicated its' readiness to provide informed independent engagement with the DfT. Further work has been identified as necessary to ensure that the proposed programmes can fully realise their intended benefits, and the Panel is committed to supporting this and ensuring that Leeds achieves its vision of Best City and the vital role which transport must play in achieving those outcomes.

Background: In the summer of 2016, Leeds City Council began a conversation with the city's communities and businesses about the future of transport in Leeds. This included Leeds City Council establishing an advisory panel of experts in the autumn of 2016. The Panel is chaired by Nigel Foster, and has sixteen members (Annex 1) selected for their expertise not just in transport but also in technology, local communities, and business.

The Expert Panel has now met seven times and, alongside their regular review activity and contribution to overall programme and project assurance, has also held a workshop on key mobility and transport themes for the future. A panel sub-group has also undertaken a visit to Reading Buses and a review of new bus engine technology with Wrightbus and First Bus.

The Brief for the Expert Panel is to provide independent oversight of, and advice and identification of potential risks about two essential areas of transport delivery and strategy, which are:

- How best to use and deliver improvements through the £173.5million Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme as approved by the Executive Board in 2017, and to provide independent assurance on the delivery of the programme.
- To advise on the approach to and development of the medium to longer term transport strategy.



So what has the Panel done to date?

Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme (LPTIP): The Panel were instrumental in advising independently on the development of the LPTIP business case and submission for the £173.5m in the December of 2016. By giving confidence to the shape and content of the proposals as they evolved. The Panel also recognised the unique challenges of delivering a transport programme of transformational change in a short period of time and emphasised the need for the early demonstration of the programme, including early wins and co-investment with partners. This process culminated in the subsequent announcement of the confirmation of the funding by the Department for Transport (DfT) in April 2017.

Since this time, the meetings have focused on reviewing progress and risks. Overall the Panel endorses the process, and is working with the delivery teams on several key areas:

- Risk evaluation is considered crucial and, whilst overall there is a good awareness of delivery risks in LCC and WYCA, the programme is subject to extremely challenging timescales to achieve funding spend by March 2021. As a direct result the Panel is actively engaged in the regular independent review of risk registers, in order to support any future discussions with the DfT that might be needed to ensure the full spend of the £173.5m.
- The Panel identified consultation and engagement as a key to success, highlighting the need to ‘win trust and build transparency’ with the public, stakeholders and delivery partners as objectives within the strategy. The importance of ensuring that seldom heard groups and those with specific accessibility needs are taken into account has been emphasised within this process and the delivery teams have demonstrably responded to this challenge by developing a series of comprehensive consultation and engagement plans for the programme. The programmes of consultation and the transparent manner of their conduct is commendable, and reflects a positive organisational culture, which we believe places LCC and WYCA at the forefront of engagement on future investment proposals.
- The Communication strategy was also identified by panel members as the key to explaining the complex narrative for the broad range of transport schemes and highways asset management now taking place and their contribution towards the Best City vision. The Panel reviewed the communications plan and engagement proposals and provided “critical friend” advice which has helped shape the final ‘Connecting Leeds’ messaging and brand. This new communications strategy will also be a crucial part in the credibility of future programmes.
- In the context of the reduction of pollution across the city as an aspect of future environmental policy, the question of the appropriate ‘bus engine’ technological solution for Leeds has been a particular focus of review by a panel sub-group which has drawn in wider industry inputs, including a technical workshop with the bus builder WrightBus and First Bus. For the short term the review confirmed the low emission benefits accruing from the advanced technologies now being included in the latest *Euro VI engine buses, but the panel also recognised that electric and



other technologies are advancing rapidly as the propulsion of the future towards potential zero or ultra-low emission solutions. The Panel's work has enabled the Council and Combined Authority to challenge the main bus operators and have asked First Bus to consider further alternatives as part of the city's bus improvement plans, building on First's plans for a trial electric vehicle service in the city.

- The Panel has contributed to ongoing work around complementary interventions alongside infrastructure improvements for bus services. These include traffic management strategies for addressing the effects of congestion on bus journey times and service reliability. They have provided insight on matters including ticket choices and pricing, approaches to more agile demand responsive solutions for lower demand including Mobility as a Service (MaaS) options; the use of Travel Apps (recent research shows young people, the public transport users of the future, want a single App to cover all choices wherever they are); parking and the approach to travel demand management and comparative travel costs for other modes; strategies for young people and access; and the role of public financial support for bus services.

Transport Strategy: Having initially focused on reviewing the LPTIP proposals and ensuring the funding is secured, the Panel is now also considering the city's wider Transport Strategy for the city. Following the publication of the city's Interim Transport Strategy in December 2016, a Panel workshop was held in January 2017 to explore the transport challenges that Leeds faces in order to create a transport strategy that supports the Council's ambitions for Best City by 2030. This workshop and other meetings have examined a range of key strategy related themes and city challenges to date including:

Strategy Related themes

- The need to influence future transport demand trends, not just react to them.
- Maximising the potential of new mobility options, including 'Mobility as a Service' (MaaS).
- The experience of travelling in 2030, including changes in how we access transport, in lifestyle choices, and in patterns of work.
- The importance of place-making in creating a more accessible, cycling- and walking-friendly city.
- Articulating a compelling message about the need to pursue a less car-centric future.

These themes have been discussed in the context of the following city challenges

- *Improving air quality and decarbonising our transport system* - The Panel reviewed the city's work on air quality and acknowledged the need for rapid improvements made to achieve legal obligations by 2020. The Panel concluded that very good progress towards this goal was being made, with Leeds taking a leading role among UK cities. The Panel also concluded that the Government should also be encouraged to develop further proposals that also address emissions from cars and vans.
- *Building on a transport system already under pressure* - the challenges of meeting the needs of a growing city region with substantial increases in (and changes in the



patterns of) travel demand combined with continuing growth of car ownership and the associated issues of peak congestion has been recognised. To this end the Panel has confirmed the importance of all the currently proposed bus infrastructure and rail improvements to provide mass transit options for the city and city region. The Panel has identified that delivery of LPTIP is crucial and will continue to provide independent assurance on programme risks.

- The Panel supported other mobility measures in association with the bus and rail projects including MaaS, cycling and walking. These form part of the LPTIP interventions and will be included in other programmes as being crucial building blocks for addressing mobility needs now and into the future.
- *Gaining a city wide consensus on the role of mass transit* - The importance of achieving a step change in the proportion of people using public transport and the recognition that high capacity, high frequency public transport remains the most effective way of moving large numbers through limited road space are vital. To help towards this consensus, the Panel has focussed initially on how the bus offer could deliver this mass transit solution and where investment in rail is needed as well as on the wider context of examining the potential for travel behavioural change.
- *Delivering public transport schemes through the reallocation of road space* – the panel has acknowledged and endorsed the place for giving priority to public transport solutions to deliver a more efficient use of the highway. The Panel has endorsed this approach as a key means of creating the capacity for growth in travel and achieving a sustainable modal shift.
- *Role of transport in good growth, promoting equality and connecting communities.* The Panel have recognised the response Leeds has made to start addressing these issues including its engagement programme and development of the Bus Hubs and Connecting Communities programme with the Combined Authority. The Panel is particularly aware that these new engagement programmes and the continuous review of feedback from them is a very positive step in making sure that new proposals and projects are understood by the communities that they will both benefit and affect. There is no doubt that LCC and WYCA are now “ahead of the pack” in their engagement activities and use of the information that comes from these programmes.
- *Changing our highway infrastructure for a people friendly city and district centres* – The panel has touched on the importance of place and sustainability in the urban environment and is contributing to the shaping of the gateway investments in the LPTIP. It has recognised the balance between prioritising pedestrian and other non-motorised users and ensuring the wider capacity and efficiency of the road networks and has recognised the value of the city’s cycling strategy. These policy challenges will continue to be explored within its advisory programme. Again, the panel has recognised the importance of the LCC/WYCA community engagement programmes in securing understanding and acceptance for what in some places might be contentious but much needed change.



Future elements of the Panel's advisory work are expected to include

- Continued review and challenge of the LPTIP risks, programme and engagement proposals, and the independent discussions with the DfT around assurance.
- Providing new inputs to the dialogue and planning for HS2 and an integrated rail station in the city recognising the critical importance of successfully master planning this once in a lifetime critical opportunity into the fabric of the city.
- Facilitating rail growth in the context of a large increase in commuting to Leeds and review of the new rail station proposals.
- Considering the transport asset management challenges for the city, especially recognising the complex challenges keeping the Leeds Inner Ring Road serviceable and helping to explore long term options for this asset.
- Building on the Panel's insights on Transport Futures, technology and behavioural change and innovation, and the inter-relationships with a connected digital city.
- Reviewing behavioural change programmes, and especially the impact of alternative public transport fares policies on public transport use.
- Reviewing best practice with an ongoing watching brief and critical friend role for communications and engagement in the light of changes in how people's expectations about travel might alter.
- A more focussed look at transport place making and the interplay with non-motorised modes reflecting on progress with the City Connect scheme, the forthcoming 'of0' bike sharing scheme and the future role of these modes.
- Reflecting on benefits realisation and measuring the impacts and outcomes of key programmes and the associated learning.
- Review of the Transport Strategy work

Conclusion:

The Panel recognises that Leeds has a number of major transport challenges and opportunities and reconciling these challenges will be crucial to the successful delivery of a long term transport strategy. By addressing these key issues, Leeds has the opportunity to be a leader in rethinking urban transport in the UK. To do this, it must have and communicate a clear vision for how transport can better serve the city and all its people enabling inclusive growth and working with communities and business.

The Panel has been able to assist the City Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in developing the LPTIP programme and delivery plan. It has been able to provide an independent and informed review which has endorsed the overall approach, whilst emphasising key components of activity. In particular, it has delivered the following:

- Challenge to the delivery teams in terms of programme content and delivery;
- Ongoing evaluation of risk and financial impacts of the LPTIP programme;
- Provide support to transport strategy development with new insights and experience from elsewhere, particularly for the bus industry;
- Significant progress in helping communications, consultation and engagement of the programme and future transport strategy;
- Provided a level of assurance to the Council and its partners that the programmes are right for the city and are moving at the pace needed to deliver the schemes and make the vision a reality.



ANNEX 1

Leeds Transport Expert Advisory Panel Membership

Paul Barnfield	Regional Director of Arriva Rail North Ltd
Prof David Begg	Owner and Proprietor of Transport Times
Stephanie Burras Panel	Chief Executive of Ahead Partnership, LEP Board Chair of LEP Skills Panel
Rosslyn Colderley	England North Director, Sustrans
John Dales	Chair of the Transport Planning Society
Ellie Evans	Partner at Volterra (economic consultancy)
Nigel Foster (Chair)	Fore Consulting and Visiting Professor at the Institute for Transport Studies
Martin Gilbert	Chief Executive Officer – Reading Buses
Geoff Inskip	Managing Director, GI Consultants
Stephen Joseph	Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport
Chris Longley	Area Policy Representative, Yorkshire Federation of Small Business (FSB)
Rob McIntosh	Route Managing Director LNE and East Midlands, Network Rail
Prof Greg Marsden	Professor of Transport Governance – ITS – University of Leeds
Mary Naylor	Vice Chair of Local National Federation of the Blind, Chair of Leeds Involving People
Rashik Parmar	IBM Distinguished Engineer, Member of Leeds City Region LEP Board
Jagdeep Passan	Chair of the Access and Usability Group, LCC, Chief Executive of Leeds Involving People.

