

West Yorkshire Bus Strategy – Development Summary

The West Yorkshire Bus Strategy has been developed over the last two years and consultation on this has occurred at several key phases. After each phase, feedback has been used to expand and refine the strategy.

The purpose of this report is to set out how the responses from the public consultation (phases 2a and 2b) have influenced the development and implementation of the now adopted West Yorkshire Bus Strategy 2040, adopted on 3 August 2017.

BACKGROUND TO THE WEST YORKSHIRE BUS STRATEGY

Every day, thousands of people across West Yorkshire use the buses to get out and about. They use buses to get to work, school or college, to attend medical appointments or get to the shops.

West Yorkshire's buses are run by around 40 private companies who decide most routes and timetables, and set fares for them. Arriva, First and Transdev run around 90% of all these services. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority does not run any of the buses but it does contract bus companies to run around 15% of the county's bus services (those which are socially necessary but would not make a profit).

In order to help West Yorkshire achieve more from its buses, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (in partnership with bus operators and District Councils) has produced a Bus Strategy which sets out what we want the bus system to achieve until 2040. The Bus Strategy is a key part of the Transport Strategy which is a twenty-year vision for developing an integrated transport network that supports the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan for sustained and healthy economic growth - especially for jobs and housing. There is a statutory requirement for The Combined Authority to produce a Local Transport Plan for the West Yorkshire area (the Transport Strategy).

CONSULTATION PHASES

- Phase 0: Pre-consultation summer 2015 – an initial scoping stage with engagement with key stakeholders and focus groups with the public
- Phase 1: 8th October - 20th November 2015 – Consultation with Stakeholders regarding the vision and principles
- Phase 2: 18th July - 21st October 2016 – Public Consultation. This consultation sought endorsement on the developed West Yorkshire Bus Strategy, and also looked for comment, additions and amendments
- Phase 2b: 28th March - 1st May 2017 – Additional Public Consultation - This consultation presented an additional policy proposal for the strategy that was developed from comments received and analysed as a part of Phase 2a

PHASE 2a – PUBLIC CONSULTATION 18TH JULY – 21ST OCTOBER 2016

The Combined Authority sought to consult with the general public and stakeholders on the content of the draft West Yorkshire Bus Strategy that had been developed throughout earlier consultation phases.

A summarised version of the strategy outlining the vision and policy proposals was printed and published online, alongside a simple questionnaire. The questionnaire asked respondents if they experienced the same problems with the bus system that had informed the creation of the policies, if they agreed with the vision and policy proposals, and if they wanted to raise any additional comments, or suggestions for improvements. Alternative versions of the summary document and questionnaires were available in easy read and story board format, as were versions in braille, audio and additional languages upon request. The aim was to ensure participation was inclusive.

At the same time as the phase 2a consultation, Leeds City Council (LCC) was undertaking a transport conversation with Leeds residents on the future of transport in the city (website). As a part of this, colleagues at LCC and The Combined Authority produced a questionnaire for young people which incorporated questions from the Leeds Transport Conversation and West Yorkshire Bus Strategy.

The Combined Authority commissioned consultants AECOM to undertake independent analysis and reporting of all feedback and responses received to the consultation.

Overall the AECOM report concludes that the consultation showed strong support for the vision and policy proposals, suggesting no fundamental changes to their content.

PHASE 2a FEEDBACK

As well as strong support for the content of the draft West Yorkshire Bus Strategy, respondents to the consultation commented on what they felt the strategy was missing, and on operational, 'here and now' issues with the bus system.

What was felt to be missing from the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy was an appropriate and clear policy addressing accessibility needs. It was decided that an additional policy should be included in the strategy that brought together and was stronger on what was needed to make the bus system more accessible for all. The content of this new policy was put out for consultation as phase 2b.

BUS 18 PROGRAMME

The Bus18 programme (<http://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/transport/bus-18/>) was developed as a pledge by bus operators to look at what they could do to improve the bus system in the short term, by 2018, so the operational issues raised in Phase 2a were presented to the Bus18 board thematically.

You said buses are unreliable, failing to operate or not running to time

- **No quibble' free travel voucher**, from 24 March 2017 any passenger who is not happy with their bus journey can claim a free travel voucher from either First, Arriva or Transdev bus operators. Also as of 24 March 2017, if your last

bus of the day doesn't arrive within 20 minutes of the scheduled time, you can call a taxi, save the receipt and claim the cost back from either First, Arriva or Transdev.

- The Bus 18 punctuality and reliability work stream is bringing together operators and district councils Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield, to progress 26 schemes to improve **bus corridors and City/Town centres** with £1.037m of funding by March 2019 (Leeds bus corridor and city centre improvements are a part of the Leeds Transport Conversation).

You said you were not satisfied with the attitude of bus drivers

- The Bus 18 customer service work stream has set up a **Bus Driver Engagement Group** to consider ways to address issues with driver customer service.
- The Bus 18 ticketing work stream is working with operators to aid drivers understanding of tickets, product, passes and best value for money options

You said the cost of travel is high, suggestion discounts and improvement to multi operator travel

- Operator only tickets will shortly be able to be **loaded onto the multi operator M-Card** (smart travel card). A **Day Saver carnet ticket** has been launched for travel in West Yorkshire providing discounted travel for part time workers.

You said you don't know the best ticket to buy or how to pay

- By early 2018 bus passengers will be able to use contactless bank cards to pay for their travel on most buses. Bus operators and The Combined Authority have improved the way changes to bus fares are communicated to passengers

You said you have problems with the reliability of real time display units, and their frequency at bus shelters

- We are replacing all of the smaller "TV style" real time displays with clearer easy to read screens. We are updating of back office systems to improve the reliability of the real time predictions.

PHASE 2B FROM 28TH MARCH – 1ST MAY 2017

As a result of feedback received through the Phase 2 Bus Strategy consultation, we undertook an additional public consultation around an accessible bus system. Feedback from phase 2 had demonstrated that this was particularly important to all, but especially for users with short and long term disabilities. To reflect this, we proposed an additional policy to the Bus Strategy regarding improving accessibility for all

All responders to phases 1 and 2a (who had provided contact details and indicated that wanted to be kept involved) were contacted about the consultation as well as key stakeholders and groups.

PHASE 2b FEEDBACK

You said the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy didn't go far enough to show how the bus system would be made accessible for all

- We have strengthened the Accessibility requirements of the Bus Strategy following consultation. The policy seeks to ensure that the strategy addresses issues that customers and communities faced when travelling on the bus system. These problems were not limited to particular disability groups or ages, and therefore the policy was developed for as wide as possible consultation with the general public and stakeholders.
- The Combined Authority and bus operators are working together to assist bus drivers help wheelchair users.
- The accessibility policy proposal sets out how the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy will include and be inclusive of individuals with additional needs, and communities, in the design and development of a bus system that ensures a better customer experience.
- Overall there was strong support for the inclusion of the accessibility policy proposal in the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy.