
Public Transport



Bus Services

The bus is the workhorse of local public transport in Leeds. Despite the decline in patronage since the 1980s, buses account for the majority of public transport trips across the city and we believe their role should be strengthened. The current bus network has evolved slowly over many decades but it has rarely been systematically evaluated to take account of changes in land use. The whole network should be reviewed on a first principles basis in response to present patterns of demand and social need. The aim should be to develop a high frequency bus network operating on all key radial and orbital routes across the day.

A new bus network would address the particular shortcomings of the existing network:

- infrequent services, particularly in the evenings and on Sundays;
- the weakness of orbital services;
- the circuitous nature of some radial routes;
- the low quality of services to many recent developments on the urban fringe;
- the virtual absence of night bus services, despite the thriving night-time economy; and
- poor services between small towns and villages in the district.

To improve reliability and enhance journey times, the city should implement and enforce bus priority measures on all key bus routes, beginning with the city centre and major radial corridors. Bus priority should be complemented by on-board measures to facilitate swift boarding and alighting, including multiple doors, smart payment and a simplified fare structure.

To improve the user experience, vehicles should be comfortable and clean. Accurate, real time information should be available via smartphones and displays at most bus stops. The city's bus fleet should contribute to improving air quality by converting to ultra-low and, ultimately, zero emission vehicles.

Evidence from bus systems across the world indicates that in order to achieve these goals, regulation of the bus market is necessary. In such a market, bus operators deliver services under contract to the public transport authority which determines the routes, fares, service levels and vehicle specifications. Operators compete for contracts and the winners are held to account for their performance. The city would be able to invite operators from around the world to bid for services in the Leeds City Region. High performing operators can be properly rewarded.

Regulation would enable the public authorities to use public subsidies more efficiently to strengthen the entire network, rather than being confined to supporting loss-making routes. Moreover, profits from busy routes can be used to support less popular routes to build and maintain a more comprehensive network.

It would allow for the planning of a truly integrated multi-modal network in which bus services link up with railway stations. In a regulated market, it is possible to deliver a simple and fully integrated ticketing system with multi-modal fare-capping. This eliminates confusion and gives users the confidence that they will never over-pay for bus and rail services.

We recognise that a publicly-regulated bus system will still be required to make difficult trade-offs between commercial imperatives and social need. The city must balance the need to generate revenue and cater to areas of high demand with its obligation to provide a minimum level of service to everyone, including in lower density and peripheral areas. Regulation allows the city to hold those who plan and operate the network to account. This should provide a firm foundation for an honest discussion about these compromises.

Park & Ride

Building on the success of existing schemes, the city should develop further park & ride facilities on suitable sites on the edge of the urban area. This will provide an attractive alternative to the car for users who have limited access to public transport near the start of their journey, such as commuters and visitors from surrounding districts. Park & ride helps to reduce the need for city centre car parking.

However, bus-based park & ride locations will only be attractive if the buses have significant priority over other traffic en route to their destinations. It must also be competitive with the cost of parking in the city centre. The city should not, however, lean too heavily on park & ride. The long-term goal of transport strategy in the city region should be to increase the proportion of residents who have access to public transport for the whole of their trip.

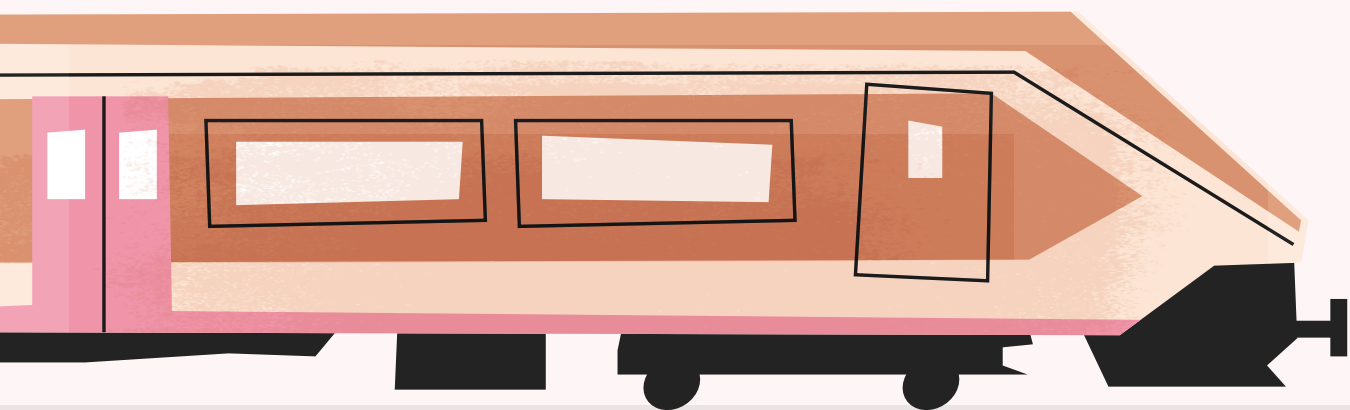
Rail Services

The railway network should provide rapid links between the major cities, towns and suburbs in the Leeds City Region. Functioning like a German S-bahn system, there should be frequent services throughout the day. The stopping services of the regional network should be complemented by express services to other City Regions.

Major investment in rail infrastructure is needed to develop such a system:

- new stations should be opened in key locations;
- new sections of track are required to plug key gaps in the network, including links to the Spenn Valley, Otley, Wetherby and Ossett, and between Castleford and Garforth;
- the entire network should be electrified;
- major expansion of track and line capacity is needed at Leeds station, which functions as the hub of the network, including the opening of new through and terminal platforms and increased capacity on the line between Leeds and York.

Platforms for High Speed 2 (HS2) must be constructed adjoining the existing station to ensure integration between high speed and classic rail services. Any redevelopment scheme should allow for a future east-west Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) route. In addition, high speed lines should be configured to enable HS2 and NPR services to run through Leeds station, allowing for enhanced rail services between Leeds and South Yorkshire, across the Pennines, the North East and Scotland.



Integration of Public Transport

We support the full integration of public transport in Leeds, allowing seamless transfers between services and modes with users able to use the same payment system to make all journeys. Ticketing products should apply across all modes and operators.

The timetabling of services, the design of the network and the physical design of key hubs should facilitate easy interchange between services and modes. In Leeds city centre, there is a particular need to enhance opportunities for interchange between bus and rail services (including HS2) and between different city bus services.

Paying for Public Transport

Public transport fares must be competitive with the overall cost of using other modes and affordable for everyone. Currently, off-peak single and day fares are not always attractive to car owners. Meanwhile, low income users, who often do not have access to a car, are often priced out of making trips on buses and trains. Daily, weekly and monthly fare-capping reduces the anxiety around selecting a public transport fare by guaranteeing that a user will pay the lowest price for the trips they actually make.

While many of the measures we recommend will enable public transport to operate more efficiently and reduce costs, there is a need for subsidy to ensure fares are attractive and to maintain a satisfactory level of service. This is likely to be particularly true in the earlier phases of implementing improvements and for off-peak and orbital services.



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