



IMAGINE AN EXCELLENT BUS SERVICE FOR LEEDS



TRANSPORT AND LIVEABLE LEEDS

Background

Leeds Civic Trust has published a new agenda for sustainable transport in Leeds: *'Our Transport Vision'*. This responds to the imperative of addressing the Climate Emergency and has other big benefits including improving air quality, increasing road safety, enhancing street life and improving health through active travel. The requirement to 'build back better' after the impact of Covid-19 adds to the urgent need for change. This is a pivotal time for transport in Leeds but it is also a time of opportunity to address the city's deep-seated challenges. The election of a Metro-Mayor of West Yorkshire in 2021 will bring new powers and devolved funding giving the potential to do things differently.

Leeds is the biggest city in Europe without a metro or tram system, so buses are particularly important here. De-regulation and privatisation have resulted in a big fall in bus use across the Northern conurbations whilst services have been reduced and bus fares have gone up by 60% in real terms. In West Yorkshire, bus journeys per head of population have declined by 20% in the last 10 years whilst road traffic has grown substantially. At the same time some other cities like Edinburgh and Nottingham, which run their own buses and have developed tram systems, have managed to grow public transport use significantly. So has Bristol, where most services are run by Firstbus, as in Leeds.

Leeds needs to grasp opportunities to change and improve its bus services. The Metro-Mayor will have powers to franchise buses like London and most European cities; bringing buses back into public control was the number one recommendation of the Leeds Climate Commission Citizens Jury. Now is the time we should think about the shape, scope and quality of the bus service that we want for the future.

The Project

Leeds Civic Trust is launching an extensive public engagement - *'Imagine an Excellent Bus Service for Leeds'*. The central idea is to engage with a wide spectrum of day-to-day knowledge and experience from individuals, groups and organisations about bus services and to share their expectations and aspirations of what excellent public transport in Leeds would be like. The project is about aspirations, not about data collection. It aims to understand residents' perceptions of bus accessibility, reliability, safety and affordability. It will explore perceptions of the barriers to bus use and limitations of the current network in Leeds. Central to this is how the availability and quality of buses affects people's lives, including those who currently can't or don't use buses.

This project will provide a platform for new ideas and debate on how buses could and should be improved. It will draw on people's experiences of excellent bus services in Britain and abroad. The intention is to go beyond the usual approach of passenger satisfaction surveys used by transport professionals and bus companies and to give people the opportunity to express their views in an open way, not by a structured survey. The objective is to raise expectations and aspirations, helping to set an ambitious new agenda for the in-coming Mayor.

Approach

- Professional publicity/design work will be commissioned to produce initial publicity for the public engagement, and more broadly the initiative will be widely publicised using local media, social media and through existing Leeds-based interest groups

- A “competition of ideas” will be launched to which entries will be invited from individuals, groups and organisations with an interest in the city’s bus service. We will reach out to Leeds Civic Trust members, affiliated local community & amenity groups and those who participated in the Eastside competition. Specific organisations to be engaged with might include Bus Users UK Campaign for Better Transport and Our Future Leeds. Disabilities groups, schools, colleges and universities will also be encouraged to engage with the competition
- “High level” contacts (including individuals who may take part in the competition, support the webinar and workshops programme and be influential in delivering on the ideas generated) will also be identified by the steering group
- Parameters for the competition of ideas will be developed but will be loosely structured so as not to be restricting.
- Facilitated workshops and webinars on good practice elsewhere will be organised to raise aspirations and demonstrate what is possible
- A panel of experts will be convened to assess contributions and ideas
- There will be prizes and publicity for best contributions
- A report bringing together ideas and conclusions will be produced and disseminated

Project Outcomes and follow up

A report and web site will be produced based on the entries and public contributions. It is envisaged that the report and web site would be similar in format and quality to the Trust’s Eastside competition outcomes (see www.liveable-leeds.org.uk).

The report will be written so as to structure the public’s input into clear themes and ideas and will include some case studies of excellent bus services from elsewhere. It will provide specific proposals to put to the new Metro Mayor, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leeds City Council

The project will provide a useful resource base of all the contributions and of community engagement.

Follow up Webinars/seminars will be organised to ensure lessons learnt and ideas generated are given widespread publicity and a plan developed to influence policy-making at a city and regional level will be implemented

Resources/organisation

A small Steering Group will manage/direct the project including the Leeds Civic Trust’s Director and three individual members of the Transport and Liveable Leeds Group. This will report back to the Trust’s Transport & Liveable Leeds Group and Planning Committee.

A budget of approximately £40k has been allocated for the project.

A Project Development Officer will be appointed to co-ordinate project, be point of contact, analyse responses etc, working on this project for an estimated 3 days a week.

An experienced transport consultant will be appointed to advise on the project, provide material on exemplars elsewhere and oversee the final report, in conjunction with the Project Development Officer.

Design/IT consultant to produce web site and publicity (to be appointed).

Provisional timescale

Task	Date
Appoint design/IT consultants	December 2020
Advertise for Project Development	December 2020
Interviews/appoint PDO	January 2021
Appoint transport consultants	January 2021
Scope work programme in detail	January 21
Start of work programme	February 2021
Refine timetable	Late February 2021
Launch public engagement	March 2021
Webinar for participants	April/May 2021
Deadline for entries	End June 2021
Report completed	Early September 2021
Website and launch	Mid September 2021
Follow up	October 2021 onwards