



Leeds Civic Trust

CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO WYCA CONNECTIVITY STRATEGY: BUS STRATEGY

1. General Points

- 1.1 We are interested in the analysis of potential growth in the bus market but note that this Bus Strategy was completed in February 2020 (that is before the first lockdown), with much of the data based on 2018. Given that the Strategy and Network Review were also carried out before the recent National Bus Strategy was published (2021), the WYCA Strategy is already out of date. It will probably have to be changed quite radically to deliver the Bus Improvement Plan required by October 2021.
- 1.2 We also believe further analysis will be needed to reflect the post lockdown demand patterns. All this further analysis may need more time and the Mayor may request an extension to the October deadline. However, instead of delaying the proposed timeline for the years 2021, 2024 and 2033, some pilot bus services could be developed to test the response post lockdown.
- 1.3 There are hints about the appropriateness of light rail for some corridors and we wonder how this would work with the mass transit system. This review seems to have been completed in isolation to other parts of this connectivity infrastructure plan.

2. Comments on the Objectives

2.1 **To develop a bus network that is sustainable and facilitates the aspired level of growth in passenger numbers.**

By sustainable here do you mean the network can be sustained financially or environmentally or both? There is no mention how you are going to achieve sustainability and passenger growth, for example by adopting a franchised system, which we prefer, or aiming for public ownership in the long term. This would provide a more integrated and easier to use network, eliminating the complexities of competition for passengers. Experience over the years and internationally has highlighted the detrimental effect of traffic congestion and the cost impact this has on delayed services as well as the negative impact on passenger demand. To sustain growth, we need to see more initiatives, for example, to provide bus lanes and reduce delays at traffic lights, such as the good work being completed in the centre of Leeds during the lockdown.

2.2 **To enable inclusive growth in West Yorkshire by improving connectivity to areas of economic opportunity.**

There is no detail on how this work was carried out and what analysis was conducted to assess economic opportunities. On the surface though, this is the key issue that seems to have been addressed. If so, then what of changing travel patterns post lockdown?



2.3 To develop an inclusive and accessible bus network that meets the needs and requirements of the customer and enabling access to key services.

Nothing in this document covers accessibility in the sense of people with disabilities or for people with different requirements.

2.4 To develop a bus network that is presented within an integrated single public transport network.

This document doesn't cover this welcome ambition. We favour the introduction of a franchised system.

2.5 To realise local environmental aspirations including significantly reducing local emissions.

This document doesn't cover this.

3. Future Programme

3.1 Thinking beyond this document, we would like to see the following key issues happen through the Bus Improvement Plan:

- a. a commitment to a fully integrated public transport network with bus services franchised to facilitate a single brand with tickets applicable to all buses - we consider the Bus Partnership has not delivered (and will not deliver) the outcomes necessary to transform bus travel in West Yorkshire
- b. there is a need for extensive local public involvement at the development stage of this Bus Improvement Plan, broken down into specified areas with their own particular features and needs - in parts of this Strategy, the use of inaccurate area names seems to demonstrate a lack of local knowledge so the work should go beyond being a desk exercise
- c. there is also a need to analyse wider travel needs and not just peak time commuting, including orbital and inter-urban routes, and night services.

3.2 It is important we get this 'new' bus service right first time. To get it wrong at this point will turn many people away from bus use. Hence the importance allowing sufficient time for the plan, involving the public and piloting changes.