



Leeds Civic Trust

Comments on WYCA Connectivity Infrastructure Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Leeds Civic Trust is a civil society amenity group which has for over 50 years campaigned for the city of Leeds through encouraging development that is a source of pride, conserving & enhancing its heritage and promoting the improvement of its public amenities. With some 500 individual members, 90 corporate members, 30 affiliated local civic societies or community groups within Leeds and strong links to key stakeholders in business, academia and local government, the Trust is able to speak out independently through the work of its volunteers and paid staff.
- 1.2. The Trust has had a long-standing interest in the improvement of transport within and to/from Leeds and has commented on various rail schemes throughout the North of England where they affect travellers in Leeds and West Yorkshire. The Leeds Civic Trust provides an independent view which has at various times both challenged and supported plans promoted by a variety of stakeholders.
- 1.3. This response to the current consultation has been prepared by the Trust but reflects many of the views of a wider range of interested parties.

2. General Comments

- 2.1. Leeds Civic Trust welcomes the WYCA's consultation on its Connectivity Infrastructure Plan. We recognise the need to develop detailed plans to support both the delivery of existing schemes and the process of bidding for government funding for new developments.
- 2.2. However, this consultation precedes the election of a WY Mayor in May 2021. Transport will be one of the mayor's key responsibilities. The mayor will also have responsibility for spatial planning and bringing these two functions together will be key to developing a coherent and sustainable vision for our region's future. It is therefore vital that whoever is elected is able to support the final strategy.
- 2.3. The document states that this Plan is based on the 2017 WYCA Transport Strategy and our main concern is that it does not appear to have taken on board the profound changes that have taken place since then. All WY local authorities have declared Climate Emergencies but the Plan does not reflect the urgency of tackling surface transport's contribution to this. There is no mention of reducing the need to travel and the Plan is not ambitious enough to achieve the target of making WY carbon neutral by 2038.
- 2.4. The pandemic may bring about fundamental shifts in the way many people work and accelerated changes in our commercial centres. It has also brought a new understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing. We do not see these issues reflected in the Infrastructure Plan, which barely mentions health and is almost completely focused on journeys to work and journeys to the city centres, based on the perceived benefits from economic agglomeration. This 'business as usual' model will not deliver a net zero approach as it requires drawing employees from a larger catchment area (with consequences for carbon generation).



- 2.5. We feel there needs to be a radical reassessment of the overall objectives within this Plan and how these can be refocussed to address the key issues which will determine the long-term sustainability of life on this planet. We accept that this will require significant life-style changes but there is evidence that more people, and especially the young, are realising that this is essential.

3. Specific Comments

- 3.1. P2 Second paragraph states *"We want to make it easier for people to access good jobs and training opportunities, but we also believe that every single trip matters."* We haven't found this reflected in the rest of the document as the focus from here on is almost exclusively on work related journeys. Also, there is no mention of health improvement as an important object.
- 3.2. P5 We hope the 2017 Transport Strategy will be updated to take account of the past 4/5 years. We hope too that the ambition to put *"walking, cycling and green public transport infrastructure at the top of our priorities"* will be reflected in spending plans. We look forward to hearing how you will *"continue to develop our proposals with our communities and partners"*.
- 3.3. P7 We would like to see tackling the climate emergency as the first objective and improving health and wellbeing added to the list as number two.
- 3.4. P9 What are the measures needed to bridge the gap to reach net zero? Even if these are reliant on others, shouldn't we know what they are?
- 3.5. P10 On the need for evidence to support modal shift from cars, there is already plenty of evidence that demonstrates the success of road pricing and charging for workplace parking. The other essential element is high quality, affordable public transport. We do not need more studies - what we need now is bold political leadership.
- 3.6. P11 *"Bus networks will be revitalised"* The evidence clearly shows that bus partnerships are not working. *"Cars and vans will be used less"*. Evidence suggests that this will need to be facilitated through pricing mechanisms.
- 3.7. P12 *"The WY economy is centralising around our growing city and town centres. This will create greater demand for travel into cities."* Does this vision take account of post-Covid 19 changes? How does it align with current working patterns? Is it desirable to continue this centralisation of economic activity?
- 3.8. P14 An objective for Local Rail Services should be the provision of a 7 day a week railway which also operates into the evenings to encourage leisure journeys.
- 3.9. P15 We welcome the proposal to pause the development of new road schemes. We would like to see a strong commitment to reducing demand for travel, rather than simply managing this.
- 3.10. Pp16-21 We have not looked at the detail of the studies but hope that WYCA will work with the five WY local authorities to set out clear strategic goals, and principles for prioritising investments. We hope that in future detailed plans for local transport infrastructure will be co-produced with communities for whom these plans are intended. We are pleased that Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIPs) will *"identify prioritised investment in walking and cycling infrastructure to support everyday journeys"*. We hope that this will be driven from what communities want, such as safe routes to schools and local high streets. These sorts of investments will be essential to encourage walking and cycling among sections of the population who currently do not walk or cycle.



- 3.11. P19 We are also keen to learn how *“our phase one LCWIPs successfully trialled new methodologies for community engagement. We are now rolling out the approach to the whole of West Yorkshire”*. Evidence suggests that engaging with communities in a meaningful manner to identify mobility issues and then co-design, develop and deliver infrastructure improvements together with behaviour change programmes, produces the best results.
- 3.12. P22 The implication here seems to be that congestion is what has caused buses to lose patronage. It is accepted that congestion does extend journey times but this could be compensated for by adding buses to the service until appropriate priority measures can be introduced. Surely the fact that 40% of the population in Leeds and Bradford has access to just one bus per hour outside of peak periods (p25) is of greater relevance. Again, all the focus is on commuter trips, and apparently based on data from the 2011 census. It must be possible to get more current data to plan our transport strategy.
- 3.13. P25 Amongst the Transport Challenges for the Leeds Bradford area, there is a note that rural villages are not connected by bus - such routes are important for leisure travel so must be timed to suit such users. In addition to villages, there are significant residential estates within the urban area which are very poorly connected.
- 3.14. P26 Operation of public transport services in the Pennines valleys of Calderdale and Kirklees will be difficult, with infrequent bus services making it difficult to visit the area for leisure purposes.
- 3.15. P32 Analysis of trip purpose should be included here.
- 3.16. P33 The diagram focuses on trips between cities or to and from the centres. This suggests that the modelling is based on people almost exclusively commuting into centres to work or shop - travelling between suburbs and to villages/towns should be given far greater priority. We question the validity of this model in 2021 (see comments on P12, above).
- 3.17. P34 Again, there is no specific mention of health and wellbeing. The phrase *“spaces that are safe, easy to use and enjoyable”* is too unspecific.
- 3.18. P35 We do not fully understand what is meant by low place function. Is that something to do with the number of people using the space or the intensity of use?
- 3.19. P35 What were the criteria used in the decision-making framework to identify where investment is most required? Were these decisions based on expected outcomes and the impact these would have on issues such as deprivation or health inequality, or impact on reducing carbon emissions? Is there a hierarchy of outcomes? How were the citizens of WY engaged in prioritising these decisions? How will they be in future?
- 3.20. P38 We would find it useful to see a breakdown of how the spend was allocated across each of the following categories: buses, cycling infrastructure and walking schemes.
- 3.21. P40 What budget is available for this period and how will it be allocated across schemes? Schemes for delivery should be differentiated from those for development in order to highlight true progress.
- 3.22. P44 What is the strategy for meaningful community engagement on walking and cycling plans? Too often, this has been limited to tweaking aspects of design on schemes which have already been bid for without any meaningful public engagement.
- 3.23. P48 We strongly agree that *“encouraging people to change how they travel calls for range of policy measures and supporting programmes”*. In addition, we urge that WYCA urgently *“explore the options for raising new funding locally, including through fiscal demand management measures that support this strategy”*.



- 3.24. P51 We are pleased that the devolution deal will give access to longer term funding and hope that the new Funding Framework will clearly set out how the CA and partner councils will work with their citizens, as well as with the private sector, to design, develop and deliver the plan over the coming decades.
- 3.25. P52 We look forward to seeing the carbon impact assessment tool being brought into practice. We raised the need for such a tool at a meeting with the CA in October 2019.
- 3.26. P53 We would hope that this plan would be driving a **reduction** in transport associated carbon emissions, rather than simply *“developing programmes and projects that do not negatively affect the region’s ability to meet the Region’s net-zero carbon target.”*

4. Summary

- 4.1. We are interested in your plans to evaluate the impacts of your interventions. We note that evaluation of most cycling and walking interventions hitherto appears to be based on **output** – infrastructure in place, behaviour change programme delivered – rather than **outcomes**, such as long-term modal shift or other behaviour change in targeted groups. This will require the identification of such outcomes at the very beginning of the project so that measures can be designed and built into the whole process.