



WEST YORKSHIRE BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

LEEDS CIVIC TRUST PROPOSALS

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The National Bus Strategy requires the West Yorkshire Mayoral Authority to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan by October 2021. Leeds Civic Trust would wish to see the following improvements in the plan.
- 1.2. Leeds has declared a Climate Emergency with a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
- 1.3. In order to help achieve this, the new Transport Strategy requires an increase of 130% in bus patronage (over pre-pandemic levels) by 2030. This requires a big increase in accessibility, capacity and frequencies.

2. Network, Services and Routes

- 2.1. The bus network needs to be fully integrated with local rail services, including ticketing, and to have alignment with services in adjoining authority areas (South Yorkshire, and North Yorkshire for Leeds, together with areas for West Yorkshire as a whole).
- 2.2. The Leeds City bus routes should be reviewed and the coverage of the network extended. The new network must be driven by consultation and accessibility planning to understand where the gaps are in the network for access to key locations such as hospitals, further education colleges, supermarkets, leisure facilities and peripheral employment sites by direct services, rather than connections through the city centre.
- 2.3. A simpler, more easily understood network of 'Mainline' routes is required. These should be direct, avoiding time consuming diversions so as to make services fast and more competitive.
- 2.4. On Mainline routes, buses should run at least every 5 minutes in the day and every 10 minutes evenings and Sundays. Mainline routes could split into branches towards outer terminals.
- 2.5. Mainline routes should serve stops within a short, accessible walk of City Station and the Bus Station. This may require additional bus stop/route capacity using the City Loop's route following removal of most through private car traffic to the Inner and Outer Ring Roads.
- 2.6. A new 'Local Link' network of smaller electric buses should be set up to connect neighbourhoods with local facilities and to provide interchange with Mainline services. This will be facilitated by 'no penalty for bus change' ticketing as in London.
- 2.7. The new Local Link network should be developed with active neighbourhood involvement. The concept could be developed with initial pilots to explore its possibilities.
- 2.8. Local Link services should be viewed as infrastructure to provide basic access, and not be dependent on commercial viability. They should run when the Mainline services run, making evening connections possible, resulting in public transport being a safer and more attractive option for everyone to use. This would especially work towards ensuring the safety of those deemed vulnerable in society with protected characteristics (regarding gender, race, age, disability, etc.), who may otherwise have to walk the first and last mile of their journey.



- 2.9. Local Link buses would provide a range of orbital services between neighbourhoods and district shopping centres, hospitals, parks, employment areas, etc., avoiding the need to travel via the city centre.
- 2.10. The Local Link network would also provide links to the city centre from inner city areas like Cross Green, Richmond Hill, Harehills, Sheepscar, Woodhouse, Hyde Park and Holbeck which, off the main roads, currently have very poor bus provision.
- 2.11. Some orbital routes would need to be Mainline to provide a more direct and quicker service to city wide services like hospitals and employment areas. These should connect with other Mainline and Local Link services at key hubs (including Park & Ride sites) to provide a mesh of travel options.
- 2.12. The city centre loop bus ('Citybus') should be extended to serve wider areas including South Bank, Holbeck Urban Village, Leeds Dock and St James' Hospital - it should not operate to out of centre destinations such as Halton. It should be free and run every few minutes.
- 2.13. A single route numbering system is essential to avoid present confusion between operators.

3. Fares and Information

- 3.1. There must be a single agency to provide information including real time information. The present split between West Yorkshire Metro and bus operators is confusing and misleading, with recent examples of differing information being provided. The duplication of information in different formats results in lack of ownership and responsibility by the providers and a lack of confidence by the public.
- 3.2. Comprehensive and consistent websites, apps and branding for all public transport information/ticketing are essential.
- 3.3. The real time/satellite location system is central to reliable operations and passenger information and must be significantly upgraded and its reliability drastically improved. The real time location of buses could be used to 'stop short' or 'run express' should services be disrupted (e.g. if delays cause one bus to be immediately followed by another, the first could run 'drop off only' in order to return to its timetable as soon as possible).
- 3.4. Real time monitors should be provided at most boarding stops.
- 3.5. Bus fares within Leeds should be set at London levels, currently £1.55 for any journey plus a transfer within an hour. 'No penalty' interchange between buses must be a key principle of the new fare structure.
- 3.6. Daily/weekly/monthly capped fares would also be available but the aim must be to simplify fares to make buses easier to use.
- 3.7. Children's free fares and Young Person discounted fares should at least mirror London.
- 3.8. With the change in travel to work patterns brought about by Covid-19, consideration could be given to removing the before 09.30 for Elderly Persons' Travel.
- 3.9. Buses should be cash free with ticket payment off the bus as far as possible in order to speed journeys and reduce costs. In addition to mobile apps, easy and accessible methods of off bus



payment need to be provided such as ticket machines (with cash and contactless) at stops and payment at post offices and shops.

4. Vehicles

- 4.1. New buses must be electric or emission free with the aim of the whole fleet being emission free by 2025.
- 4.2. Buses are an important element of civic identity but West Yorkshire is a 'confederation' of distinct cities and towns rather than a conurbation- nearly 80% of buses in Leeds run entirely within the city boundary. It is important that each Metropolitan District has its distinctive identity livery within an overall West Yorkshire design framework.
- 4.3. The Leeds City network has re-introduced the traditional two-tone green Leeds City livery and this should be retained.
- 4.4. As Transport for London has demonstrated from its outset the design of buses, bus infrastructure and information are very important to the creation of a comprehensible network that is easy to use. It is essential that Leeds buses are clearly seen as a single, integrated element within the West Yorkshire network. Specific route branding should always be subservient to these overall design parameters.

5. Infrastructure

- 5.1. The efficient and timely operation of the bus network must be a key priority for highway authorities.
- 5.2. A phased programme of improvement to bus stop access should be introduced as part of the '15/20-minute city' concept.
- 5.3. Walking routes to bus stops should be carefully considered to ensure that access is convenient from key passenger generators. Bus stop locations should not be determined primarily to avoid interrupting traffic flow, as seems often to be the case at present.
- 5.4. Shelters should be provided at key boarding stops and particularly interchanges. Shelters must be clean and well-lit with simple notification app for any problems and a rapid response arrangement. They should provide comprehensive information, including network and route maps.
- 5.5. Passenger security and perceived safety must have a high priority with mobile security staff, lighting, CCTV and other measures. Consideration should be given to the potential for late evening/night buses to stop anywhere on appropriate sections of route to assist safety of passengers.
- 5.6. Bus operations needs to be much better integrated and embedded with highway and traffic management to ensure better priorities for buses. This includes traffic signal management to prioritise buses rather than general traffic flow wherever possible.
- 5.7. Traffic management should also include much more careful planning to ameliorate the impact of highway and utility works on bus operations. At present, general traffic flow seems to be prioritised over buses, pedestrians and cyclists.



5.8. Bus lanes and bus gates must have camera enforcement. Bus lanes could be in operation for more hours determined by local factors rather than standard peak hours. 'Red routes' where parking is prohibited at busy times should be introduced.

6. Future Developments

6.1. New housing developments and other facilities must be provided with attractive bus services from the outset. This might require developer funding in early years, alongside the provision of free travel passes for new residents.

6.2. WYCA is currently investigating the options for Mass Rapid Transit. For Leeds, this could be low floor trams (like Nottingham and Edinburgh) or Bus Rapid Transit (like Belfast or Amiens). BRT will involve more dedicated bus lanes and less frequent stops. It may well be appropriate for some major bus routes. BRT would work best as part of the integrated bus network proposed above and especially in association with an extensive Local link network serving BRT stops.

7. Summary

7.1. West Yorkshire must have a fully integrated bus network which works as one system with one ticketing system. It must not be fragmented by differing operators operating according to differing regimes. This requires a franchised system on the London model with WYCA in control and taking the revenue risk.

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