

## Bus Reform Questionnaire – Short Version

### Data protection

**Please tick to confirm that you have read and understood our privacy notice which can be viewed at the end of this survey.**

Yes, I have read and understood the privacy notice

**How are you responding to this survey? (Please tick one box only)**

I am a member of the public, giving my views as an individual

I am responding on behalf of, or as a representative of, a business or organisation

**[If selected business/organisation] – What is the name of your business or organisation? What is your position/title?**

Leeds Civic Trust

**There are two versions of the consultation questionnaire. You are welcome to fill out whichever questionnaire you wish and you don't have to answer all of the questions.**

The short version which contains the ten questions that are set out throughout the Executive Summary (see section 1). These are focused on key areas discussed in the Consultation Document. If you choose to answer this questionnaire, you should find all the relevant information in the Executive Summary and are not required to read the whole document.

The long version contains 47 questions. These questions are set out throughout the Consultation Document following the Executive Summary, referenced in the relevant text. The long version may be more appropriate for respondents who have a good level of knowledge and interest in the bus market as it contains more questions - some of which are more complex.

### **This is the Short Questionnaire**

You may include additional papers should the space not be sufficient for your answers.

## Section 1: Short Questionnaire

**Q1. The Strategic Case sets out the challenges facing the West Yorkshire bus market and says it is not performing as well as it could. Do you have any comments on this?**

*See Section 1.2.1 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

Bus patronage in West Yorkshire has been in decline since deregulation in the 1980s, failing to return to pre-pandemic levels. West Yorkshire is falling behind many other regions nationally in this regard which shows that its bus system isn't performing as it should.

The city of Leeds has ambitions through its Transport Strategy to be a 'city where you don't need a car', with the bus being 'the most accessible and well-used form of public transport'. Yet we know that extensive barriers remain, beyond the areas set out by the Mayor's Strategic Case, for people using bus services in Leeds and across West Yorkshire. These challenges are exemplified through the Leeds Civic Trust's 'Imagine an Excellent Bus Service in Leeds' project and long-term community engagement work. For instance:

- 41% of survey respondents were discouraged from using the bus due to expensive fares and, while integrated schemes like the MCard and Mayor's Fares are a good start, more could be done to increase affordability across the network.
- 35% of respondents noted that services are unreliable and cannot guarantee arriving on time at their chosen destination, especially at evenings and weekends, a challenge intensified by increased car traffic which causes delays to buses through congestion.
- Real time information technology is not working, with a disconnect between time showing on various bus operator apps with timetables, bus stops and the actual times that buses arrive, including the challenge of 'ghost buses'. *"Too many times I've seen a bus down a 'due' on the sign disappear...". "The First Bus App, the WY Metro info, display screen in shelters and timetables frequently have different times"*. On routes where newer buses are used, bus stops are named differently on stop flags, visual displays in buses and on-board announcements.
- The lack of frequent services makes bus use inconvenient for people. Attempts to increase frequencies have not been strong enough to encourage greater bus patronage. Where past frequencies have not been restored, operators justify this due to lower usage – the lower frequency (and reliability) mean users have chosen to drive, so further reducing patronage. Evening services have been significantly reduced and this is driving up car use at such times.
- Local neighbourhoods are disconnected because orbital and routes to key destinations are lacking, with city centre routes prioritised (many are based on former tram routes and have not changed to reflect current travel aspirations. This can cause extra delays when buses face congestion in the city centre. The Connecting Leeds 'Transport Conversation' found that 64% of those asked prioritised journeys not going through the city centre.
- Buses could be much integrated with other transport modes like trains, bikes and walking. For instance, there is a distinct lack of bus information at Leeds Train Station for onward bus travel. Buses also need to be fully integrated with potential development of mass transit in coming years.
- Passengers face accessibility challenges when using Leeds buses which are compounded for people with disabilities, mobility issues, bringing a pram on board or carrying shopping. Although raised kerbs have been provided in many locations, these are missing on key city centre stops – also there is no enforcement of 'no stopping' restrictions at bus stops so vehicles are unable to park close to the kerb.
- The quality of services is affected by an inconsistent and unfair approach to Worker's Rights for bus drivers, shown by recent disputes between First and drivers in Leeds.

These challenges highlight a public consensus in Leeds, the largest city in West Yorkshire, of the multiple ways in which the bus system is underperforming and shows that the current enhanced partnership has failed to deliver much-needed network improvements.

**Q2. The Strategic Case concludes that the Proposed Franchising Scheme is the best option for the Combined Authority to meet its strategic objectives for bus in the region. Do you have any comments on this?**

See Section 1.2.1 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.

The Leeds Civic Trust agrees that the Proposed Franchising Scheme is the best option because it provides greater opportunity to expand/revise the network and increase bus patronage. It will also allow a recast of the network to integrate with existing rail services and any future MRT.

Franchising provides a greater level of certainty because it is legally binding and unconditional in terms of how it is funded. By contrast the EP+ option would require the negotiation of terms, and much is conditional on receiving funding to improve the network.

Franchising means that West Yorkshire could have a simplified ticketing system without being blocked by a deregulated system. For instance, Reading City Buses attempted to introduce a London-style 'Hopper Fare' where passengers could make unlimited changes between routes and operators at a set fare. The initiative was blocked by the Competitions and Markets Authority as a hinderance to competition between operators. A franchised system would mean that the Mayor would have the powers to set fares that work for people.

Franchising can provide greater accountability through integrated customer service and route planning unlike the EP+ option, where multiple operators are still bound by different policies and interests. For example, Manchester's newly franchised 'Bee Network' has a single app which provides a single point of contact for any issues passengers face. Bus users can trust that the app is providing the most efficient and direct routes rather than prioritising the routes of a specific provider.

**Q3. Do you have any comments on the conclusion of the Economic Case that the Proposed Franchising Scheme will offer value for money to the public sector?**

*See Section 1.2.2 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

The Economic Case of the Proposed Franchising Scheme offers value for money to the public sector, stronger than that of the EP+ and the case set out in the Mayor's assessment. For instance, when compared to the EP+, franchising can provide two times the economic benefits from reduced greenhouse gases and passenger affordability.

In terms of profit retention, it is understood that bus companies currently make 13% profit from council funding and passenger fares in West Yorkshire, a figure that is 3% higher than what the Competitions and Markets Authority deems as fair and three times higher than the profits made by bus companies in London under public control. Under franchising, the profits currently going to bus companies can be kept within the region, controlled by the Mayor and reinvested back into service improvements and the funding of additional services.

While the EP+ may show better value for money in the short term, this leaves power of the purse in the hands of the operators who retain the financial risk. Given the lack of investment in bus services and the decline in bus patronage over the last few decades, it's clear that operators are not willing to divert enough of their profits into driving service improvements, expanding the network and/or passenger growth.

Finally, the Mayor's assessment works on the assumption that bus ridership or patronage is expected to decrease over a 20-year period and still proposes franchising as a better value-for-money option over the longer term. Therefore, if we project an increase in bus ridership, the benefits of greater public investment increase even further with a franchised system.

**Q4. The Commercial Case sets out how the Proposed Franchising would be run commercially. Do you have any comments on this?**

*See Section 1.2.3 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

We agree that the Commercial Case is right to support the Proposed Franchising Scheme and believe that the case is even stronger than the Mayor's assessment.

A higher level of security is ensured through franchising because it allows for a public body that is ready to step in when a private company fails.

Franchising ensures that profits made on services are reinvested back into supporting service improvements rather than paying dividends to private shareholders. This means that savings can be transferred onto passengers, as such making buses more affordable across the board.

At present, bus driver shortages affect service reliability. Franchising could support a new system whereby drivers are publicly employed by a single employer providing extra safeguards for drivers in terms of job security and Worker's Rights. This in turn, could prevent driver shortages and thereby increase reliability of services.

**Q5. The Financial Case concludes that the Combined Authority could afford to introduce and operate the Proposed Franchising Scheme, but this carries additional financial risk. Do you have any comments on this?**

*See Section 1.2.4 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

Leeds Civic Trust deems the suggested financial risk associated with the Proposed Franchising Scheme as a non-practical risk because bus services are already heavily subsidised under the current enhanced partnership arrangements. Under the current arrangement, bus companies pull services that are deemed unprofitable, requiring the Combined Authority to step in and fund them so public funding already forms the backbone of West Yorkshire's bus system.

Moreover, the financial risk associated with the Proposed Franchising Scheme assumes that bus patronage is expected to decline across the region. This assumption is at odds with broader regional and city-based targets, such as climate-related goals.

Transport contributes up to 40% of the carbon emissions regionally, so if we are serious in reducing these impacts it's clear that bus patronage must increase – just one bus can take over 30 cars off the roads. West Yorkshire's Transport Strategy 2040 demands a 25% increase in bus patronage by 2027, while the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy requires a 130% increase bus use as a proportion of journeys by 2030. The latter means that buses need to carry 82 million more passengers per year by 2030.

Evidence from other UK cities shows that franchising is an effective model for increasing bus patronage. In Jersey, where they introduced franchising in 2013, ridership increased by 38% between 2012 and 2017. More recently Greater Manchester's 'Bee Network' has seen an 8% increase in its first month of operation.

As a region, it is paramount that we adopt a holistic view of 'risks' associated with the status quo and move beyond a purely financial account of sustainability. Our bus network provides opportunities to support broader climate but also social and health-related goals that can provide greater support for our communities to thrive over the longer-term.

**Q6. The Management Case sets out how the Combined Authority would manage the Proposed Franchising Scheme. Do you have any comments on this?**

*See Section 1.2.5 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

We support the management of the bus network by the Combined Authority as put forward in the Management Case.

The Proposed Franchising Scheme provides a more efficient way to run the network, with management centralised and not reproduced at multiple depots across the region, thus driving down costs and better-coordinating services.

Franchising also provides opportunities for public participation. Drivers, passengers, and interest groups can, for instance, collectively organise to input to decisions that affect the network. Under the current Enhanced Partnership, diverse voices are often diluted through an uncoordinated system of multiple operators and participation channels, resulting in views that are often ignored.

Specific consideration should be given to cross-boundary services which are vital to link users outside the former County to employment, education, community service and leisure destinations in the larger centres – this is particularly important for Leeds, with its bus links into North and South Yorkshire.

**Q7. The Combined Authority’s draft Equality Impact Assessment identifies the potential impact of the Proposed Franchising Scheme on persons with protected characteristics. Do you have any comments on it?**

*See Section 1.3 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

We support the Proposed Franchising Scheme’s provision of an Equality Impact Assessment and note that no equivalent exists within the Enhanced Partnership (EP+) proposals. As such, we cannot assume that the EP+ scheme can sufficiently support persons with protected characteristics.

Greater public participation is of particular importance for persons with protected characteristics and when considering disproportionate effects of marginalisation based on intersections between gender, race, disability, sexuality and more. For instance, when Leeds Civic Trust asked how safe people felt when using the bus service in Leeds, those who identified as female felt 17% less safe than those who identify as male.

The Proposed Franchising Scheme provides a starting point for facilitating the inclusion of people in design processes from the outset. For instance, the city of Liverpool tested out prototypes of their buses through inviting members of the public to ride them, offer their views and design ideas before launching them permanently.

**Q8. Overall, to what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of the Proposed Franchising Scheme?**

*See Section 1.4 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

Support	Support in part	Neither support or oppose	Oppose in part	Oppose	I don’t know
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Why do you say this?**

We support the Proposed Franchising Scheme because it means that West Yorkshire could have a London-style system where the bus network is integrated, reliable and affordable.

Franchising is the norm across most cities in Europe and has been recently introduced in Greater Manchester and Liverpool. West Yorkshire deserves to align with an approach that works for cities across the UK and internationally. For instance, Leeds is the biggest city in Europe without a metro or a tram system, which makes buses particularly important here; residents need a public transport system they can rely on and, ultimately, a bus service that works for them.

Given the public are already substantially investing in bus services through public subsidies, they deserve to shape the services by which they foot the bill.

**Q9. Are there any changes that you think would improve the Proposed Franchising Scheme?**

*See Section 1.4 of the Consultation Document for information to support answering this question.*

The Proposed Franchising Scheme should be fully accountable to the public. West Yorkshire can learn from the successes of Manchester's 'Bee Network' where bus users can report negative experiences to the Mayor and use as evidence to fine or remove contracts of bus companies in question. It should be noted that bus companies operating under more public models have the highest passenger satisfaction rates in the country, such as municipally owned Nottingham City Transport which achieved an overall satisfaction score of 96% in 2023.

While it is appreciated that the Franchising Scheme is a WY-wide project, it should acknowledge that there will be differences in service requirements in the different districts and within districts. For example, twin-door buses would speed travel on intensively used routes running through the heart of Leeds but are probably not required in less intensively developed areas. More frequent cheaper to run single-deck buses could provide a better service in suburban areas, feeding into frequent core services at key hubs.

The current ticketing system requiring validation on a single machine does not offer a significant time advantage over cash payments. If a flat-fare system such as that in London were possible, it would be better to introduce a simple tap-on system which would allow faster boarding – if zonal fares are retained, a tap-on tap-off approach could be configured to allow boarding/alighting through any door.

The Proposed Franchising Scheme should safeguard public employment to ensure job security for bus drivers whenever contracts change hand. This could improve their welfare so that we are less likely to see disruption to services because of labour issues.

The Proposed Franchising Scheme should enable the introduction of publicly-owned operators to lower the costs of bids for franchising by removing profit from the equation. This means that focus can shift from profit margins to improving the quality of services and strengthening the network.

It is essential that the Proposed Franchising Scheme facilitates public participation, as highlighted in Q6/7. West Yorkshire could strengthen its mandate and the co-creation of services through a 'Bus Users Forum' where diverse stakeholders can shape the way the network is designed, managed, and delivered in alignment with community needs.

### Q10. Do you have any further comments?

While recognising the complex nature of the Bus Reform proposals, we feel that the format of this consultation presents barriers for people to effectively participate. Although it is appreciated that there are statutory requirements to be addressed, in future consultations, WYCA should provide more condensed versions of the 153-page supporting documentation and deliver this in a variety of formats and languages, as a supplement to the longer documentation.

WYCA should also strengthen its public engagement prior to launching the consultation to best understand people's interests and needs.

### Optional section: About you (individuals only)

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback.

**These questions are optional and for individuals responding only. If you choose to answer these questions you will not be identified by the information provided.**

All information will be handled and dealt with in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, as detailed in our privacy notice.

We want to better understand who we are engaging with and hearing from. We are required to act in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#). By asking the following questions we can make sure our work reflects the diverse communities we serve.

#### What is your postcode?

<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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#### What is your sex?

<input type="checkbox"/> Female / woman	<input type="checkbox"/> Male / man	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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#### Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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I self-describe my gender identity as:

**Age: How old are you?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
0 - 15	16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Prefer not to say	

**Ethnicity: How would you describe your ethnicity or ethnic background?**

**Asian, Asian British:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani
<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background, please state:	

**Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African:**

<input type="checkbox"/> African	<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black, African, or Caribbean background, please state:	

**Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups:**

<input type="checkbox"/> White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> White and Black African
<input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background, please state:	

**White:**

<input type="checkbox"/> English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy or Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> Roma
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background, please state:	

**Other:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other ethnic group, please state:	

**Disability: Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Yes	No	Prefer not to say
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**Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, limited a lot	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, limited a little	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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**Sexual orientation: How would you describe your sexual orientation?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual or straight	<input type="checkbox"/> Gay man or gay woman / lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/> I self-describe my sexual orientation as:			

**Religion or belief: What is your religion or belief?**

<input type="checkbox"/> No religion (including atheist)	<input type="checkbox"/> Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and all other Christian denominations)
<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/> Hindu
<input type="checkbox"/> Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> Muslim
<input type="checkbox"/> Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify, if you wish):	

## THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

If you are interested in receiving more information from us in the future regarding bus reform, please provide a preferred method of contact below.

Please select your preferred method of contact and add your details below:

Email <input type="checkbox"/>	Post <input type="checkbox"/>
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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Address line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

**How to mail your completed survey to us:**

Please return your completed survey by the closing date of 7 January 2024 to:

**Freepost CONSULTATION TEAM (WYCA)**

**Please note** you do not need to pay for or add a stamp to the envelope you use when you post your survey back to us. The Royal Mail will deliver your post for free, and the cost is covered by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

## Privacy Notice

For the purposes of the Data Protection Act (2018) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the 'controller' of the personal data which you provide in the attached form is the West Yorkshire Combined Authority ("the Combined Authority", "we", "us") of Wellington House, 40-50 Wellington St, Leeds LS1 2DE (Tel: 0113 251 7272). The Combined Authority is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office with registration number ZA051694.

The Combined Authority is collecting this data and will process it for the purpose of understanding and identifying information surrounding the future of Bus travel and Bus Franchising. The purpose of this engagement exercise is to meet, and exceed, the Statutory requirements of making a franchising scheme as set out in The Bus Services Act 2017.

Questions regarding some of your personal data and some special category data are asked as we recognise that the needs of different customer groups can vary and we are committed to improving transport services for all customers within the region. In addition, the online survey will capture your IP address when you complete an online survey, however we will not process this data further.

We publish comments/feedback you provide in the consultation's outcome reports available on the Your Voice page, to demonstrate the feedback we have taken into account. This does not contain any of your identifiable information.

The Combined Authority will share the data, comments, feedback and/or opinions obtained during the consultation with DJS Research who will provide analysis of the data for the Combined Authority Data for the purpose stated above.

Where you request a response to a question from the project team, we will share your name and contact information with the project team at the Combined Authority and with DJS Research.

We will not share your information with any other organisation or third party other than those named above. However, there may be other circumstances in which we may share or use certain information about you, which are:

- if we have a legal obligation to do so or if we are required or requested to do so by a competent authority such as the police or a court;
- if we need to use or disclose your information to obtain legal advice or in connection with legal proceedings;
- if we need to share your information to protect your vital interests if you are unable to give us consent or it is unreasonable for us to ask for your consent in the circumstances (e.g. if you are injured).

We will retain your information for the duration of the project in accordance with our information retention policy and on the expiration of such period we will safely delete it.

Information provided to the Combined Authority will be processed on the basis of Article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR which states that processing is necessary for the purposes of a task carried out in the public interest.

As a data subject you have a number of rights under the DPA. These include the right to access the information which we hold about you. In some cases you may have a right to have your personal data rectified, erased or restricted, and to object to certain use of your data.

This would not affect the legality of what we do with your personal data before you make such a request and would not stop us from continuing to use your data to the extent that we do not require your consent. It would stop us from further using data for purposes which require your consent (e.g. marketing).

If you are unsatisfied with the manner in which we collect or handle your personal data you have a right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office. Information about how to make complaints can be found on the ICO's website at <https://ico.org.uk>

We act in accordance with our corporate privacy notice, which provides further information on personal data processing and how to contact us to make a request: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/footer/privacy-notice-and-cookie-policy/>

The Combined Authority's Data Protection Officer can be contacted at [DPO@westyorks-ca.gov.uk](mailto:DPO@westyorks-ca.gov.uk)