

## WEST YORKSHIRE BUS STRATEGY

### Phase 1 Consultation on Vision and Principles

#### Introduction and Purpose

There is a statutory requirement for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to produce a Local Transport Plan for the West Yorkshire area.

WYCA is developing a new, overarching Single Transport Plan which will develop, through consultation, over the coming 6-9 months.

A key element of the Single Transport Plan is the Bus Strategy, especially since the majority of public transport journeys across West Yorkshire are made by bus.

WYCA Transport Committee approved in March 2015 to refresh the Bus Strategy. The refreshed Strategy will set out what WYCA wants to achieve with the Bus System over the next 10-15 years across West Yorkshire.

To support the development of the Bus Strategy, WYCA is now undertaking an initial stakeholder consultation around the vision and principles of the Bus Strategy. This initial stakeholder led consultation will incorporate the views from a range of organisations, including:

- Local MPs, WYCA Transport Committee, District Councillors
- District Authorities
- Neighbouring Authorities
- Large & Small Bus Operators
- Business Community
- Broader Public Sector (e.g. Universities, Health, Police)
- Campaign and User Groups
- Trade Unions

The purpose of this document is to welcome your comments and suggestions on the draft vision and principles for the Bus Strategy.

We are looking for comments on the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the overall vision for the Bus Strategy?
2. How important are each of the 8 core principles to you?
3. Are there any other important principles that we should consider including?
4. What else could be done to encourage more people to use buses in West Yorkshire?

This phase of consultation is planned to end on **Friday 13 November 2015**.

A broader public and stakeholder consultation on the Bus Strategy is planned to take place in early 2016.

The website [www.yoursayyourbus.co.uk](http://www.yoursayyourbus.co.uk) includes a feedback form on the principles. If you would like to comment or discuss the Bus Strategy please contact [yoursayyourbus@westyorks-ca.gov.uk](mailto:yoursayyourbus@westyorks-ca.gov.uk) and an officer will be in touch. We are happy to facilitate 1:1 briefing sessions as requested.

## WEST YORKSHIRE BUS STRATEGY

### Vision

West Yorkshire needs a bus system that is seamlessly integrated with other modes and focuses on the needs of its current and future customers. Our vision is to deliver a bus network that people can rely on, with quick, punctual and reliable services that are simple and easy to use, are accessible for everyone, and which provide safe and comfortable travel, offering value for money to users and to the public purse. This necessitates that we have a financially sustainable and growing bus system in order to achieve West Yorkshire's economic, environmental and quality of life ambitions.

### Summary

- 1.1 Good transport is essential to support economic growth. People need to travel to access jobs, education and training and to get to amenities and leisure activities in communities across West Yorkshire and the wider Leeds City Region. '*Better transport connectivity is the driving force*'<sup>1</sup> of the City Region's Strategic Economic Plan.
- 1.2 Although our transport network supports a high volume of passenger and freight movement, it is not keeping up with the pace of growth in our economy and the growth in our workforce<sup>2</sup>. The bus system offers the flexibility to enable transport provision to reflect and adapt to these changes. And there is mutual benefit in developing the bus system to meet West Yorkshire's economic needs. Only by steadily increasing its use can we underpin the long term commercial viability and financial sustainability of West Yorkshire's bus system.
- 1.3 Putting customers first must therefore be at the heart of the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy. The emerging principles of the strategy seek to grow the market by meeting the needs of both existing and future users through prioritising the delivery of a range of measures which will encourage customer loyalty:
  - An easily understood, integrated and stable network for West Yorkshire, that is responsive to changing needs;
  - Quick, frequent and reliable bus services;
  - Simple, smart and integrated ticketing;
  - High quality, consistent and easily understood information, fit for the 21st Century;
  - A safe, pleasant and comfortable customer experience before, during and after the journey;
  - A clear identity that inspires passenger confidence;
  - A modern, clean and accessible fleet that contributes to reducing transport's harmful emissions;
  - An affordable offer with value for money at its heart.
- 1.4 A strategy that is focused on growing the bus market will generate additional revenue that can help fund further investment in the bus network to support the economic, quality of life and environmental improvements encapsulated within the core principles of the West Yorkshire Single Transport Plan, namely to:
  - Deliver an attractive and easily understood public transport network that integrates all modes;
  - Make our cities, towns and neighbourhoods better places to live and work, and thereby encourage private sector investment;

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<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan Executive Summary, 2014, Page 19

- Embrace the latest technology to make travel easier for passengers and reduce costs for both users and operators;
- Provide a high level of access to all people and communities;
- Make best use of resources and manage our assets effectively; and
- Support over-arching principles to improve local air quality, tackle climate change, and improve the health of our communities.

1.5 The following Bus Strategy principles have been derived from evidence of what is most important to passengers.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

### **An easily understood, integrated and stable network for West Yorkshire, that is responsive to changing needs**

1.6 Evidence shows that incomplete or poor understanding of bus services, and how to use them, contributes significantly to dissatisfaction with bus services. Perception can be as important as reality - evidence from the 2014 West Yorkshire Tracker survey illustrates that non-users have a poorer view of bus services than those who use the bus. After many years of falling bus passenger numbers in West Yorkshire, non-users comprise an increasing proportion of the local population. An easily understood network of a consistently high standard that is perceived to be dependable and not prone to frequent changes is an essential requisite for growing the market. This network needs to be well integrated with other forms of transport and with land use developments, and needs to be responsive to changing travel needs that emerge as our economy develops and grows.

### **Quick, frequent and reliable bus services**

1.7 Customers desire convenience approaching that provided by the car. People who don't often use bus and/or rail were asked why they didn't, with the convenience of the car noted by over half (51.8%) the respondents<sup>3</sup>. The key drivers of satisfaction for West Yorkshire bus passengers are improved waiting times (mentioned by 37%) and on-bus journey times (32%)<sup>4</sup>. Getting the basics of punctuality and reliability right is important. It emphasises that flexibility, convenience, and the quickest journey possible are fundamental aspects of the product, and reflect a desire for in-journey times to be as 'car-like' as possible. High quality, modern and reliable buses are an important component to this.

### **Simple, smart and integrated ticketing**

1.8 Evidence highlights the importance of clarity in ticketing, with 28%<sup>5</sup> of respondents either 'not very confident' or 'not at all confident' that they usually purchased the best value bus ticket. Many customers do not know the fare to be paid until they are on the bus and most continue to pay by cash. Fares vary according to who operates the bus, with often a significant premium being charged if the customer wants to travel by different operators during the ticket period.

1.9 Unsurprisingly non-users are less confident, but even 18.2% of local bus users stated a lack of confidence in their ticket purchase<sup>6</sup>. A simple, clear, transparent, convenient ticketing system that customers can use for all bus journeys across the network, regardless of who operates the service is needed, indicating that the bywords for ticketing should be: simple (to use), smart and integrated (with other forms of transport).

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<sup>3</sup> West Yorkshire Tracker Survey 2014 (Section 1.1, page 3)

<sup>4</sup> Passenger Focus data for West Yorkshire, 2014 (page 24)

<sup>5</sup> West Yorkshire Tracker Survey 2014 (Section 1.2, page 5)

<sup>6</sup> West Yorkshire Tracker Survey 2014 (Section 1.2, page 5)

Ticketing also needs to keep pace with rising customer expectations as new payment systems become widely accepted.

### **High quality, consistent and easily understood information, fit for the 21st Century**

- 1.10 This lack of understanding about ticketing partly stems from information provision. Customers need convenient, accessible and clear information that they can understand, in a manner they have come to expect with the emergence of digital communications. Satisfaction with information is amongst the lowest individual factor in the most recent survey, at between 67-76%<sup>7</sup>. Timely and accurate information on disruptions to service is also vital, alongside clear information about the timetable.

### **A safe, pleasant and comfortable customer experience before, during and after the journey**

- 1.11 On board, factors such as cleanliness of the vehicle interior, smoothness of ride, and interactions with the driver are amongst the poorest in terms of customer satisfaction (79%, 73% and 68% respectively<sup>8</sup>). Other on-bus factors that enhance the journey experience, such as Wi-Fi connectivity and on-board information systems, are increasingly important and should be provided consistently across the network. Off-bus infrastructure such as shelters and interchanges need to be clean, safe and pleasant places for customers. Wi-Fi hotspots in waiting facilities are also desirable.

### **A clear identity that inspires passenger confidence**

- 1.12 Bus customers should consistently receive the highest level of service, regardless of the route, time of day, or operator. Passengers need to know who to go to for help, whether it is for information to help plan a journey or who to turn to when things don't go to plan. A clear, consistent identity needs to be developed that can be marketed as a single 'point of contact' for bus services in West Yorkshire. This will enable users to start to perceive the West Yorkshire network as a single entity, or brand, in the way that the London network is perceived; a network that inspires confidence and that passengers trust.
- 1.13 Underpinning this unified identity, the strategy needs to reflect that different approaches may be required in different segments of the market. Some of these will need to reflect the different economic geographies within West Yorkshire, some may relate to the customer profile and some to specific market segments, for example local 'market town' networks.

### **A modern, clean and accessible fleet that contributes to reducing transport's harmful emissions**

- 1.14 Vehicle emissions are a recognised contributor to public health problems. As the form of public transport that carries more passengers than any other in West Yorkshire, buses can be part of the solution, but, because they are mainly diesel powered, they also contribute to the air pollution problems; particularly in towns and cities where air quality is poorest. Only one quarter of the West Yorkshire fleet operates to the most recent emissions standards<sup>9</sup>, reflecting the fact that the average age of the fleet is above the national average. The Bus Strategy needs to deliver a modern, cleaner fleet that can play a positive role in reducing vehicle emissions and improving public health.

### **An affordable offer with value for money at its heart**

- 1.15 Data on customer satisfaction shows that value for money is important to passengers, as it is the poorest scoring indicator of passenger satisfaction at 63%<sup>10</sup>. This is particularly remarkable as fares are free for

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<sup>7</sup> Passenger Focus data for West Yorkshire, 2014 (page 25: 67% for 'information inside the bus, 76% for 'information at the stop)

<sup>8</sup> Passenger Focus data for West Yorkshire, 2014 (page 25).

<sup>9</sup> West Yorkshire Low Emissions Strategy (page 49) 24.4% of fleet operate to Euro V standard and 1.0% Euro VI or equivalent

<sup>10</sup> Passenger Focus data for West Yorkshire, 2014 (page 24)

about 30% of all passengers<sup>11</sup> and subsidised for others. It is also clear that understanding of fares is poor, and this could contribute to poor satisfaction of value for money. What is perceived as 'affordable' or 'value for money' will reflect individuals' circumstances, the purpose of the journey and the quality of the service being delivered, highlighting the need for different approaches to different market segments.

- 1.16 Value for money for the taxpayer is a further dimension to this as public subsidy in the bus network is significant. Sustained long-term investment in all aspects of the system, including the vehicle fleet will not only deliver a better off and on-board experience for passengers, but will also help deliver value for money for the public purse, reducing the costs of congestion to the economy, lowering bus operating costs through greater fuel efficiency, and improving air quality with consequential benefits for public health expenditure, in addition to contributing to the growth of the local economy.

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<sup>11</sup> Department for Transport, 2013/14, Table BUS0113: Older and disabled concessionary passenger journeys on local bus services by local authority, for West Yorkshire