West Yorkshire Combined Authority | Tracy Brabin Mayor of West Yorkshire

Our Reference: 3602

18/05/2026

Freedom of Information Act 2000 Enquiry: Bus Franchising Cross-boundary joint planning with SYMCA

Thank you for contacting West Yorkshire Combined Authority ('the Combined Authority') with your request for information, received on 17/04/2026. Your request was:

"I'm requesting detailed information held by WYCA relating specifically to the assessment, planning, reinstatement and future provision of cross boundary bus services between West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire.

This request is made in the context of WYCA's published Bus Reform / Franchising timelines, which confirm that:

- Network design work is already underway
- Cross boundary planning is a statutory requirement under the Bus Services Act 2017
- Tranche 1 franchising begins in March 2027, with procurement beginning in 2025
- Network planning, lotting, depot strategy and route specifications are being developed now (2024–2026)
- WYCA has stated publicly that draft network maps and service specifications will inform procurement documentation

Given these timelines, the information requested must already exist in draft, working or interim form.

This request concerns WYCA generated planning information only, not operator bids or tender submissions.

Please treat each numbered item as a separate request under Section 1(1)(a).

3. Correspondence and joint planning with SYMCA

- Correspondence (emails, letters, meeting notes, minutes, presentations) between WYCA and SYMCA relating to cross boundary bus services
- Joint assessments, shared planning documents or collaborative modelling
- Discussions relating to the reinstatement of the routes listed above
- Documents relating to statutory cooperation under the Bus Services Act 2017 "

This request is being handled under Freedom of Information Act 2000, and I can confirm that the Combined Authority holds some information covered by your request:

A number of documents relevant to your request are already published and accessible in the public domain. Information that is readily available to applicants is exempt from

disclosure under Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. You may locate further material through our published committee papers using the WYCA ModernGov (link here) search function, where agendas, decisions and minutes of Combined Authority meetings are available.

Please note that some of the information contained within these sources may now be superseded; however, it represents the most up-to-date information held by the Combined Authority at the time of your request.

Information on the treatment of cross-boundary services under franchising can be found within the Bus Reform Assessment and associated documents: West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Bus Reform Assessment – link here and Consultation response report – link here.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) also holds information in the form of a letter of response from WYCA to the South Yorkshire Combined Authority's (SYMCA) Bus Reform consultation. A copy of this letter is provided.

In line with Franchising legislation, the franchising scheme only applies within the West Yorkshire Combined Authority boundaries. Cross-boundary bus services would instead require a service permit to operate within West Yorkshire as non-franchised services. The Combined Authority recently consulted on its plans for a Service Permit Regime. Information on the treatment of cross-boundary services under franchising can also be found within consultation materials on the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Bus Service Permit Regime – link here.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) also holds information in the form of a letter of response from SYMCA on WYCA's recent Service Permit Regime consultation. A copy of this letter is provided.

You will notice that some of the information relating to the personal data of third parties has been redacted from this document. Where this is the case, you will see a box with the text 'Section 40(2) Personal Data'.

This is because some of the information held is exempt from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the FoIA, which prevents the release of personal data. Disclosure would contravene UK GDPR principle (a) because there is no lawful basis for processing or sharing the personal data as part of a Freedom of Information Request.

The Combined Authority also holds additional information concerning cross-boundary routes, including correspondence with SYMCA. This information is commercially sensitive and relates directly to future tendering activity and live contractual arrangements. The information is therefore being withheld under Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act, as disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of both the Combined Authority and potential bidders. The correspondence with SYMCA also contains sensitive operational discussions at a time when both authorities are

progressing franchising at different stages, and disclosure at this point would risk affecting ongoing programme development and inter-authority collaboration.

As Section 43(2) is a qualified exemption, the Combined Authority has considered the balance of the public interest. There is a public interest in transparency around cross-boundary service planning, accountability for public spending and understanding how the Combined Authority coordinates with neighbouring authorities. However, releasing commercially sensitive procurement material and internal operational assessments would be likely to harm the Combined Authority's commercial position, distort the competitive environment for operators and prejudice future tendering exercises. Disclosure would also risk inhibiting open dialogue with SYMCA at a time when both authorities are managing sensitive and evolving franchising programmes.

On balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The information is therefore withheld under Section 43(2).

If you believe that your request for information has not been handled properly, you can ask for an internal review of our decision. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113
Website: www.ico.gov.uk

For your information, there is no charge for making an appeal.

Yours sincerely,
Information Governance Officer
freedom.info@westyorks-ca.gov.uk