

Transport Focus workplan: October 2021-March 2022

1. Overview

Transport Focus aims to make a difference and make transport better for those who use it.

Transport Focus therefore needs to be relevant, effective and useful in what we do so we can make that difference.

The challenges facing the transport world are significant, requiring long term changes. The user view needs to be at the heart of the decisions being made to meet those challenges.

The biggest long-term challenge is the decarbonisation of transport with government priorities set out in the *Transport Decarbonisation Plan*, Transport Scotland's *Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan* and the Welsh Government's *A route map for decarbonisation across the Welsh public sector* (including rail services).

To be successful, sustainable transport choices must be attractive to users. This provides the spur to our work in enabling sustainable travel choices. So we are also ensuring that the major reforms to rail in Great Britain and bus in England bring improvements to passengers.

As the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic recedes – hopefully for good – we must build back a better, fairer, safer public transport system that is attractive to passengers.

In considering these challenges, Transport Focus has identified significant opportunities in the coming months:

- Contributing the user view on changes arising from the *Transport Decarbonisation Plan* and similar initiatives in Scotland and Wales, the creation of Great British Railways, the National Bus Strategy and developments in electric vehicle charging in particular.
- Leading the debate about post-Covid and climate-related behaviour change in transport.
- Continuing to develop cutting edge, rapid, digital, flexible (including at different geographical levels), cost-effective insight that is representative of transport users.

Our innovative, evidenced-based advocacy provides the bedrock for dealing with these tasks: translating insight into action.

Here we set out our plans for the next six months.

2. Introduction

What should Transport Focus work on now?

Reducing carbon emissions in transport

The decarbonisation agenda has become central to the transport debate given the UN Climate Change Conference in the autumn of 2021 and the Government's *Transport Decarbonisation Plan*, published in July. The need to act is urgent and the programme of action outlined in the plan will be challenging. To be effective, the priorities will need to be implemented in a way to make it easy for transport users to take forward. We will continue the insight we have already begun to find what can help people change their behaviour.

Working towards a post-Covid normality

The Covid-19 vaccination programme has brought greater certainty to our lives. An optimistic scenario is that the effect of Covid-19 and other diseases will be minimal during this period and beyond.

But it is likely that we will need to live with Covid-19 in some form and for some time, assuming its potency recedes. We have learnt a lot since March 2020 to adapt our work. Readjustments will be needed if there is more homeworking and hence less commuting. This might include changes to ticket retailing and different messaging to encourage transport users to use public transport.

We will therefore help operators and other decision makers to enable passengers to feel confident travelling on public transport. We have already been categorising passengers into different segments to help with this.

We anticipate that road travel will continue to return/grow so that our work with National Highways maintains relevance on behalf of road users, whether in a car, coach, lorry or van, riding a motorbike, bicycle or horse, or on foot.

Strategic reforms in rail and bus

Earlier in 2021, the Government published two significant reforms: *The Williams-Shapps Rail Plan* and the *Bus Strategy for England*. These will result in significant changes in rail and bus. Given the climate challenge, it is vital that the public transport system is one that people actively want to use if they are to be encouraged to use it.

On rail, the implementation of the plan will take some time. We are working to ensure that passengers remain at the heart of the changes and also to adapt Transport Focus to the changes it will undergo.

On bus, after briefing local transport authorities on developing passenger-centred Bus Service Improvement Plans through seminars and guidance documents, we will move onto the next phase of the Strategy. In the autumn we will focus on regular, ongoing engagement with a wide range of stakeholders as they develop their Enhanced Partnership proposals. A formal consultation process must be followed with a number of statutory consultees. Transport Focus is one of the statutory consultees and expects to formally review each LTA's proposal in early 2022.

Campaigns

Two of our three campaigns were curtailed during 2020-21, and *Sort My Sign* continues in a low-key way during the pandemic.

Diversity matters

We continue to review the diversity of the people we talk to in our insight and other work so we hear much more from the seldom heard. We must ensure that our own people are as diverse and inclusive as possible, so we are more effective and useful in representing transport users.

The next six months

In particular, we will:

- Ensure that the user view is at the heart of decarbonising transport so as to help people change to more sustainable travel
- Help rebuild passenger confidence in using public transport post pandemic guided by their needs, experiences and new ways of living
- Advocate for the user as rail reforms progresses towards implementation
- Advocate for the user in bus reforms in England by helping local authorities develop a passenger-centred service
- Continue to refresh our insight and adapt it to the new circumstances
- Continue to identify barriers to transport for those with disabilities to help improve their access to it
- Improve the organisation's inclusivity and diversity, including extending the reach of our insight
- Continue our *Sort my Sign* campaign and challenge National Highways to address the issues raised.

3. Meeting the transport challenges

3.1 Decarbonisation challenge

The Government's *Transport Decarbonisation Plan*, published in July 2021, sets out challenging targets. Some of these will require transport users to make significant changes to the way they travel. To achieve the plan's priorities and targets, users' attitudes will need to be at the core to be effective. We know much about public transport users and needs beyond making sure that public transport is an attractive and convenient way to get around (see below).

We will continue to identify barriers that consumers face as we have with, for example, the take up of electric vehicles and their charging. But there is much more to do:

- build on our sustainability research to identify potential behaviour change methods to help a significant modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport
- *Continue to understand and research ways to help and support transport users to choose greener transport*

3.2 Remodelling transport user insight post Covid-19

Insight underpins everything we do. For more than a year, since the Covid-19 pandemic began, our insight was remodelled to adapt to the changed world. For

example, we monitored and identified people's satisfaction towards different aspects of public transport during Covid-19. Using this data, our segmentation work has identified different types of users in such a way that helps the transport industry engage with their passengers to give them confidence to travel as (hopefully) Covid-19 diminishes.

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to adapt some of our insight methods, which we will take into the new world.

We will continue to:

- Build on our highly successful and widely used omnibus survey of public attitudes to travel, covering all modes including road use. This will be subject to the state of the recovery and adequate funding. We will adapt their frequency and content according to external developments.
- Use the segmentation we developed to identify different types of users, mining the omnibus data gathered
- Develop our new passenger satisfaction surveys for users of rail, bus and tram journeys. They will be faster, always-on digital surveys. In the interim, we will still conduct passenger satisfaction surveys for train and bus. This will enable us to gather and publish the views of representative samples of users or potential users of different types of transport and allow for more targeted, immediate and effective interventions
- Use our expanded and refreshed Transport User Panel to explore user issues in more depth.

3.3 Balancing supply and demand in public transport

Uncertainty is likely to remain on when and whether passenger numbers return to pre-Covid levels. Lower levels could have an impact on income to the transport providers and their financial sustainability. This could be further exacerbated by funding pressures.

If the levels of bus and rail services were to reduce, we would work to ensure any reductions were proportionate, temporary and, wherever possible, not reduce choice in certain areas. Tough decisions by local/national bodies are best informed by data and evidence and through consultation with users and communities.

3.4 National Bus Strategy for England

The Government's new strategy *Bus Back Better* puts new emphasis on improving bus services in England. It proposes investment on what we know from our research are current bus passengers' priorities: more services running more reliably and providing better value.

We have begun a successful engagement with local authorities in England who are starting to develop the necessary Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) ahead of implementing Enhanced Partnerships through the provisions set out in the strategy. We aim to be useful to them in providing a passenger-focused bus service. We will also work with the Government, bus operators and transport authorities to make sure passengers' needs are core to the new arrangements. This includes continuing to:

- Develop a series of guides and toolkits to support Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) in developing their BSIPs.

- Continue to run webinars with LTAs to share our guides and toolkits to assist them with the preparation of BSIPs and Enhanced Partnerships.
- Develop a new measurement of bus user satisfaction to assess the impact of new investment and activities to be part of the new arrangements.
- Be a member of the working group to oversee the delivery of the first Bus Centre of Excellence.

During this period, we will be consulted by the LTAs, on a statutory basis, on their Enhanced Partnerships. We have told them what features we are looking for.

3.5 Rail reform

The *Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail*, published in May 2021, sets out fundamental changes to the operation of the railways in Britain. They will have implications for passengers. The imperative for meeting passengers' needs may increase especially if the railway can no longer rely on the commuter market and it needs to develop as a more sustainable form of transport.

We will continue to work with the Department for Transport (DfT) to ensure that the proposals for the new railway remain passenger focused. We will transform our own structure to deliver the different passenger champion requirements set out in the plan. These requirements include

- sharing best practice from across different transport services
- researching passengers' experience of rail travel and engaging with them
- investigating where passengers are being failed and escalating concerns to the Secretary of State
- taking on the role of monitoring passenger complaint volumes from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

We will also continue to work with DfT on rail fares and ticketing reform.

3.6 Making a difference for passengers

We will continue to advocate for transport users at a city/region level as tough decisions on long-term public transport priorities are made across major city regions. This will be achieved through our roles in chairing and representing passengers on strategic bodies¹.

4. Making a difference for road users

England's motorways and major 'A' roads, the strategic road network, are crucial to the country. As traffic continues to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, we will continue to represent the interests of all who use National Highways' roads, whether in a car, coach, lorry or van, riding a motorbike, bicycle or horse, or on foot.

As decisions start to be made about the Government's third road investment

¹West Midlands Bus Alliance, Bristol City Transport Board, Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance, West Yorkshire Bus Alliance, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority bus partnership, Mayor for Greater Manchester's Transport Board, Transport for the North's Partnership Board, Pan, London Strategy Group (rail), Transport for Wales Advisory Panel, Scotland's Rail Recovery Task Force

strategy (RIS3) for 2025-30, we will ensure that findings from our road users' priorities for improvement research are at the heart of discussions. We will produce a summary of road user requirements from RIS3, including those of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians, the logistics and coach sectors and those who are seeking to switch to an electric vehicle.

Having trialled the innovative use of social media to encourage road users to report signs that need fixing through *Sort My Sign*, we will continue to press National Highways to solve the problems identified and find long-term solutions to recurring, generic issues. Clear road signs mean easier, safer journeys. If it's not clear, it's not safe.

5. Inclusive transport

While all our work benefits all transport users, the needs of disabled users require additional focus. We have boosted this area of our work and will continue to do so.

- We will continue to boost our capacity to engage with disabled passengers, motorists and stakeholder groups. Our refreshed and expanding Transport User Panel is helping with this. We will also continue to identify new partners we can work with among disability stakeholders.
- We are planning to trial a new digital format for our Accessibility Forum in 2022.
- Continue to represent road users on National Highways' Roads for All Forum.

6. A well run and governed, effective organisation that is seen and heard by transport users and decision makers

In order to maximise our external relations efforts, we will ask our stakeholders what they would like to hear from us about. We will continue our programme of public board and other meetings both face to face and digitally, using innovative digital channels to encourage greater participation and engagement.

We will broaden and deepen our engagement with transport users to improve the representativeness of our insight, including the Transport User Panel. To assist in this, we will continue to explain more about our role in helping users. We will continue to extend our communications reach to more consumers and stakeholders through the use of social media, videos and podcasts.

We will continue to explore and develop ways to improve the accessibility of our output.

In addition to enhancing our representativeness of our insight, we are planning to increase the diversity and inclusion in our Board and staff recruitment processes by communicating with a broader range of people. Monitoring Board and staff attitudes to this will be part of raising awareness of the issue internally.

We will continue to deepen our fruitful relationship with London TravelWatch

enabling us to deliver more integrated user representation and better value for money.

We'll continue to run our 24/7 press office, service the website and social media channels, continually update our popular data hub and the new 'barometer' dashboard and investigate new ways to bring the work of Transport Focus to the attention of those who need it. We will also continue our high-quality publications output, including insight reports and stakeholder newsletters. We will continue to explore opportunities to run large-scale consumer-facing campaigns where appropriate.

The delivery of this plan relies on our staff who have demonstrated their effectiveness and resilience during the past 18 months. As we look to return to more normal working, we will trial hybrid working arrangements to maximise the better features of our experience of operating during Covid-19 and to ensure staff feel safe going out to meetings. We will ensure our policies and systems continue to provide flexible and safe working.

We will continue to focus on internal communications to ensure we maintain the improvements in information sharing made during lockdown, and to support the business as it adjusts to a new way of working.

Please note, more detailed projects are set out in the attached Appendix.

October 2021

Appendix: Detailed projects for October 2021-March 2022 Workplan

1. Rail

- 1.1 Continuing to represent passengers on Network Rail's supervisory boards across England and Wales. In their Wales & Western Region we will be helping them develop their customer proposition through providing insight such as passenger priorities. This approach could also develop in other regions and prepare the way for the implementation of the White Paper.
- 1.2 We are working with Transport for Wales to provide consumer led insight to wider transport needs in South East Wales.
- 1.3 Boosting the rail user voice. Some train companies fund additional consumer representation on behalf of their passengers. Transport Focus will carry out extra work on behalf of those using Great Western Railway, Greater Anglia, Northern Trains, South Western Railway, TransPennine Express, West Midlands Trains, Transport for Wales and Network Rail Wales.
- 1.4 Continuing our role representing passengers' interests on licence conditions and policies such as Accessible Transport Policies, National Rail Conditions of Carriage, ticket office opening hours, complaints handling procedures and Penalty Fare schemes.
- 1.5 Continuing to work with DfT on rail contracts.
- 1.6 Our complaints handling, alongside London TravelWatch will continue. We will also respond to ORR's complaints handling guidance.

2. Bus

- 2.1 Identify industry best practices as Government and industry move towards new partnership arrangement
- 2.2 Developing new ways of conducting bus passenger surveys whether it be the gathering of data or the liaison and follow up with the operators and authorities on that data.

3 Roads

3.1 Measuring and reporting consumer opinion. As required by the second Road Investment Strategy, we will:

- Carry out the Strategic Roads User Survey (SRUS) to continuously measure satisfaction with journeys on National Highways' roads and contribute to discussions about the target to apply from 2022
- Carry out the Logistics & Coach Survey: Strategic Roads every four months to measure satisfaction with National Highways' roads among businesses in these sectors
- Continue the development of our new survey into the needs of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians using National Highways' roads
- Develop a new survey to measure satisfaction with the user experience when charging an electric vehicle on, and potentially close to, National Highways' roads.

3.2 Ensuring road users' priorities are at the heart of the third Road Investment Strategy 2025-30 (RIS3), we will:

- Following publication of new insight into road user priorities for improvement to

National Highways' roads, we will provide and publish our advice about road user priorities for RIS3.

- Building on that advice, work with the DfT, National Highways and ORR to bring the road user view to the development of RIS3.
- Continue to work with National Highways, DfT and ORR to ensure the yardsticks used in RIS3 – and in some cases before – properly measure what matters to users.

3.3 Holding National Highways to account on behalf of consumers

We will:

- Ensure that National Highways responds appropriately to our recommendations following research into road user experiences of all-lane running smart motorways. These include
 - implementing the conclusions of DfT's evidence stocktake as rapidly as possible and report publicly on progress. This includes the introduction of stopped vehicle detection technology.
 - increasing efforts to communicate practical advice, including what to do if you break down.
 - helping drivers understand that there's a coherent system - staff and technology - compensating for no hard shoulder.
 - in the tone of communications, acknowledge that drivers have reasonable concerns about having no hard shoulder - guard against downplaying them.
 - working with Government and the police to increase compliance with the law, particularly the 'red X'.
 - measuring, and striving to continuously improve, performance on each all-lane running section in respect of:
 - time to spot a stopped vehicle
 - time to then display 'red X'
 - time taken for traffic officer or emergency services to arrive.
- Explore whether arrangements to protect the welfare of those who are stranded on Highways England's roads are adequate, including in the event of disruption to cross-channel traffic.
- Continue to review Highways England's actions in light of previous Transport Focus's recommendations. We'll acknowledge progress so far and push them to go further where necessary. The key areas include:
 - Roadworks management
 - Managing disruption and the lessons learned from it
 - Road surface quality.

4. Disabled transport users

We will

- Continue to identify partners with whom we can work from the disability organisations
- Explore opportunities to further improve accessibility for transport users in the Rail White Paper and bus strategy
- Continue to comment on train company Accessible Travel Policies and consultations on exemptions from accessibility regulations for trains, stations and rail replacement vehicles.