

Transport Focus Board Meeting: Minutes

Date:	Wednesday 17 November 2021
Times:	10.00-13.00
Location	Video Conference (Zoom)
Classification	Not protectively marked

Attended

Board members:

Jeff Halliwell	JH	Chair
Kate Denham	KD	Board member
Theo de Pencier	TdP	Board member
Rob Wilson	RW	Board member
Arthur Leathley	AL	Board member for London
Cllr William Powell	WP	Board member for Wales
Trisha McAuley OBE	TM	Board member for Scotland
Keith Richards	KR	Board member

Management and other staff in attendance:

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief Executive
David Sidebottom	DS	Director
Nigel Holden	NH	Corporate Services Director
Jon Carter	JC	Head of Board and Governance
Stephanie Ahemor	SA	Board and Governance Executive
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of Strategy
Sara Nelson	SN	Head of Communications
Louise Coward	LC	Head of Insight
Louise Collins	LCn	Senior Stakeholder Manager
Oliver Banks	OB	Digital content and communications officer

Event production team

Luke Bodin	Director, BA Events
Sarah Bush	VisAir

Members of the public: Around 400 members of the public viewed the proceedings live.

Part A: public affairs

1. Chair’s welcome and opening remarks; apologies and introductions; declarations of conflicts of interest.

Jeff Halliwell (JH) opened the meeting and thanked those present and viewing remotely for joining. He noted that the theme of the meeting would be West Yorkshire transport issues. JH highlighted positive feedback from the last Board meeting, which was hybrid, held online and in-person in London and expressed his wishes for continued in-person meetings while ensuring transparency through streaming them online.

A number of speakers will be engaging in a Q&A, covering a broad range of transport topics. Those viewing on Twitter could submit questions online, which could then be put to relevant speakers.

JH noted that the meeting was also a formal Board meeting, and as such they would have some official business to go through. No declarations of interest had been made. As such, he would handover to Cllr Kim Groves (KG).

2. ‘Virtual’ welcome to West Yorkshire and high level aims for the regional transport network – Cllr Kim Groves (KG), Chair of Transport, West Yorkshire Combined Authority

KG thanked the Board for the opportunity to contribute and set out the West Yorkshire Combined Authority’s (WCYA) ambitions and aspirations for West Yorkshire, with the aim to create a modern, world-class transport system. Following the creation of the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan including strategies for long-term infrastructure investment across transport modes, there is a particular push for improvements to timetabling. KG emphasised a desire to continue collaborating closely with Transport Focus to ensure user experience is at the heart of implementation.

Challenges faced in ‘Building Back Better’ include ticketing complexity and modal shift. At present, there are around 2700 different rail tickets, meaning that rail travel is often not easy for customers to understand. Additionally, modal shift from private car to public transport requires new ideas and work at speed and scale to meet existing Net Zero targets.

KG noted that several infrastructure improvements have been planned, including a pipeline of bus priority corridors and the West Yorkshire Rail Vision. The Connectivity strategy has involved educational and employment zone mapping, highlighting areas of priority for customers to travel to via public transport. She also explained that the first electric park-and-ride operating nationally is in Leeds, with the electricity generated able to power a fleet of electric buses.

Finally, KG commended Transport Focus for their work in collaboration with the WYCA, playing a key role in their improvement forums and providing customer insight.

Work going forward will focus on market strategy, personalising the offer to customers to exceed their expectations.

3. Overview of Transport Focus work in West Yorkshire

David Sidebottom (DS) thanked KG for her commendation. He noted that a key aspect of the organisation's role was to help transport users in West Yorkshire by helping to break down barriers to travel and make public transport a more attractive alternative.

DS noted that two rail operators – Northern and TransPennine Express – are the key providers of local and inter-regional travel in the North of England. Work with these operators has focussed on three areas: changing demand following the pandemic; upcoming announcements for investment in infrastructure and making sure that reliability, punctuality and value for money are prioritised.

DS highlighted good collaboration between Transport Focus and the WYCA, helping them to understand local users to target investment and improvement through the Bus Passenger survey and other national insight work.

Transport Focus's work with National Highways and across the supply chain ensures that national, strategic work is understood at a local level in West Yorkshire. Current projects include the improvement of facilities at roadside services and improvements to road infrastructure.

4. Overview of recent insight including omnibus and emerging from lockdown

Louise Coward (LC) stated that her presentation would focus on insights from transport users during the pandemic and implications for the future.

Transport Focus have tracked the impact of Covid-19 on transport since early in the pandemic, publishing insights weekly. At the beginning of the pandemic, only 5% of those surveyed used public transport, as reasons for travelling were very limited. Most recently, 25% of those surveyed had taken public transport in past seven days. Further insights were found through qualitative analysis, highlighting the impact of the pandemic by looking at segmentations of different groups of people and their specific needs for assurance on public transport use.

LC noted that a key issue at present is the gap between people who have used public transport since the beginning of the pandemic and those who have not. Of users surveyed, 89% felt safe travelling via rail and 86% felt safe travelling via bus. However, this decreased to 66% and 59% respectively for non-users.

Behavioural changes have changed the public's expectations in what they want from public transport, with increased emphasis on cleanliness and the amount of space and information

provided before journeys. Users have noticed positive changes to public transport since the start of the pandemic, and wish for these to remain.

Moreover, how people live, work and travel has changed. 61% of users could do most or all of their work at home, a huge difference to pre-pandemic levels. Considering future use, 64% expect to travel to work for only one or two days in the future, and 87% expect some form of 'work from home' element in future. People generally have a large say over where they work from, and employers tend to be more supportive of their choices, lending to the appeal of flexi season tickets to better address new travel patterns.

LC highlighted the rollout of two new surveys which aim to measure and understand public transport use following the continued easing of restrictions. The rail and bus user weekly survey, focuses on more traditional measures of customer satisfaction (e.g., punctuality, value for money) and is updated weekly to allow for up-to-date analysis. This survey will continue until March 2022, giving good tracking information through the winter. Additionally, developing long term ways of measuring user experience and satisfaction is a key priority, with future surveys to be carried out in-person, providing a more inclusive approach to understand users' needs as they make journeys in real-time.

Finally, LC noted the need to understand transport user views around the climate and sustainability. Two reports have been published: 'The journey towards sustainable transport', a scene-setting piece on what climate change will mean to transport users, and 'Plugging the gap: driver's experiences with electric cars', on electric vehicles and how they fit into a future, carbon neutral transport system.

5. Rail based recovery: regional service and infrastructure improvements – Tony Baxter, Regional Director East, Northern (TB) and Matthew Golton, Managing Director, TransPennine Express (MG)

TB and MG thanked JH for his introduction and outlined their roles in their respective organisations. TB began by explaining how Northern have welcomed back their customers in 2021/22, in a very different, emerging landscape. Passenger flows now peak on Saturdays and Sundays, highlighting the demand for leisure travel. While passenger numbers have returned to around 75% of pre-Covid levels, commuter levels are still reduced. TB noted customer's high expectations on crowding and cleanliness. He expects that internal operations will return to normal in around 2023 and noted a paradigm shift in flexibility, with eight timetable changes this year – practically unheard of pre-Covid.

Comparing Northern to other rail operators, TB noted that the North of England has recovered very well in terms of passenger numbers. This is due in part to its leisure base and retail, and this strong recovery is looking to reduce its subsidy.

Since becoming an OLR in 2020, Northern have developed detailed plans on adapting and modernising their network. Key train and station deliverables include the new train stock, digitalising the existing fleet and investing in cleaning and lighting. In terms of community and accessibility, Northern have introduced the first permit for scooters, as well as 2 and 3D

Mapping to help passengers. Job creation and training are a key priority for Northern, with 650 cleaning staff hired to keep trains clean. Customers remain of the utmost importance, with satisfaction mapping to understand network needs.

MG highlighted TransPennine Express's (TPE) focus on building a stronger, more customer responsive railway following the pandemic. In terms of performance, its contract helps drive performance improvement, with TPE being one of the top performers in Public Performance Measures (PPM) in the rail industry.

MG noted the leisure-based recovery and agility needed for rail operators to respond to this market and build on demand. TPE expect to introduce additional services in December, particularly where demand is strongest such as Anglo-Scottish routes which are up to 99% of pre-Covid levels.

Questions and Answers with Tony Baxter (TB) and Matthew Golton (MG)

Q: Rob Wilson (RW) asked two questions. 1) To Cllr Kim Groves (KG), as the vast majority of people travel by car, has much thought been put into introducing a congestion charge as a solution to reducing carbon emissions? 2) To train operators, could they reassure the Board that the performance figures are not high by means of perception due to the bar being 'lowered', but are comparable to previous years.

A: 1) In KG's absence, Dave Pearson (DP) noted that almost a third of West Yorkshire is rural, and highlighted the importance of car travel in West Yorkshire, although overall reduction of car usage is still the target. Leeds Park and Ride continues to be successful. DP also noted the expansion of electric vehicle charging in rural and residential areas.

2) MG stated that current performance numbers are comparable to previous years and noted that new government contracts highlight their performance achievements.

Q: Arthur Leathley (AL) emphasised the need to understand how employee and employer needs for work-life balance may change over time. He invited TB and MG to provide details on how Northern and TPE are researching future trends and how they will consult with employers over the next 5 years.

A: TB noted Transport Focus' work as a key tool in predicting future trends, as well as their own user research using automated passenger counts on trains and monthly surveys of over 6,000 passengers. He states that while he expects rail use to be more dynamic with more working from home, and passenger levels to be lower on Mondays and Fridays, he expects that mid-week and weekends will be busy.

MG echoed TB's response, citing similar tools used to track trends. MG noted that many do not have the option of working from home and are dependent on the railway, showing the need to maintain rail service patterns. Moreover, he noted that passenger numbers are continuing to rise as we emerge from the pandemic.

6. West Yorkshire Bus Alliance: improving bus services in the region – Louise Collins, Senior Stakeholder Manager (LCn), Dave Pearson, Director of Transport Services, WYCA (DP); Paul Matthews, Managing Director, First West Yorkshire (PM); Patrick Sibley, Area Managing Director, Arriva Yorkshire (PS) and Paul Turner, Commercial Director, Transdev (PT)

Louise Collins (LCn) explained the “critical friend” role of Transport Focus on the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance, previously known as Bus 18. Transport Focus feed in research from their insights, help interpret results, compare with other areas and identify areas of improvement for West Yorkshire. Transport Focus aims to be helpful, supportive and provide expertise. She emphasised the two-way relationship, noting the usefulness of understanding what is happening on the ground in West Yorkshire.

Dave Pearson (DP) noted that West Yorkshire is an interesting combination of rural and urban, and has a wide range of different operational territories with varying passenger expectations. DP acknowledged that West Yorkshire is one of the lower performing areas in the Transport Focus survey and that the Authority is focused on improving customer satisfaction.

At the time of engagement and consultation on the bus strategy in 2017, people wanted change sooner than traditional transport planning strategy could execute. Therefore, short-term initiatives delivered through Bus-18 such as cross-operator ticket acceptance on snow days, last bus guarantees and reimbursing customers for a taxi if the last bus did not arrive, were rolled-out.

DP stated that long-term structural changes to meet the changing, flexible travel-led environment came in the form of the M-card: a multi-modal operating scheme for bus and rail travel via a smart card or mobile app. DP noted that Transport Focus had a key role in facilitating workshops between operators, the alliance and the industry to bring stakeholders together.

While the alliance has shown value in the pandemic, DP pointed to over optimism and hesitation in decision-making for larger projects as a weakness of the group. He noted the election of the Mayor (Tracy Brabin) as an opportunity to enhance travel partnerships in the region, due to her pledges to the electorate on improving better transport links.

Patrick Sibley (PS) noted bus operators’ initiatives in the region in making transport simpler, presenting existing users with an easy to navigate network. He stated the overall aim to double patronage in Leeds over the next 10 years and to ensure that high frequency (15 minutes or better) routes are easily recognisable with colour-coded maps, as well as named routes, in a Tube-style format. PS noted that infrastructural improvements are underway, with updated maps for 1,500 bus stops and additional audio-visual stop announcements on-board to be replicated across the bus network.

Paul Turner (PT) noted the success of the under-19 ticketing scheme as part of the short-term initiative delivered through Bus 18. He highlighted collaboration between Transport Focus and Youth Parliaments in bringing operators and young people together.

Following consultation, the ID requirement for concessionary tickets was removed, in addition to a flat, affordable fare of £1.20 established for most bus routes. PT stated that a well-funded marketing campaign was carried out over the summer to attract young people in time for the beginning of the new academic year in September. Initial analysis suggests that passenger numbers for young people have recovered better than older groups.

Paul Matthews (PM) explained the desire to turn more young people into bus ambassadors, building dialogue, generating ideas and trying to develop young people's employability for careers in the industry. Specific initiatives have included a challenge to design a bus for the future and for Year 6's to discuss buses' roles in a net carbon zero system.

Questions and Answers with Louise Collins (LCn), Patrick Sibley (PS), Dave Pearson (DP), Paul Turner (PT) and Paul Matthews (PM)

Q: The value for money of M-cards was compared to other regional transport card options, such as Oyster cards. It was also noted that contactless card payments are not always available on buses.

A: DP noted the large public transport subsidies in London, meaning that the cost per journey is less. The Bus Service Improvement plan discusses affordability issues, but there is a need to attract more customers to bring costs down. DP outlined the additional impact of the pandemic on demand. He stated that most bus operators accept debit card payments, but further work is required to add journeys together with a maximum day cap. Funding is required to improve on-board technology and security in order for this to happen.

PM stated that improving value for money on buses is high on the Mayor's priority list. FirstBuses will have a maximum day cap for FirstDay and FirstWeek tickets. Steps towards multi-operator capping are also being taken. Moreover, he also noted that what may be 'right' for London may not be right for West Yorkshire.

Q: Cllr William Powell (WP) outlined his experiences with bus transport in Wales, noting issues around the workforce and asked the operators to discuss their experiences in making the industry more attractive.

A: PM noted that this is a challenging time for the sector. He stated the role of young people in filling gaps in the workforce but noted the difficulty in convincing people that there are fulfilling careers in the bus industry. PM also noted that the lack of drivers at present is a temporary situation and has had a minimal effect on customers, there is no shortage of applicants to roles.

PT stated that promoting lifelong schemes and continuing professional development could encourage more young people to consider the industry for their future career.

PS agreed there is a greater shift towards considering work-life balance. He suggested that making sure that the industry has positive appeal in terms of flexibility is very important.

7. Strategic roads in West Yorkshire: an overview – Simon Boyle, Yorkshire & North East Regional Director, National Highways (SB)

SB introduced the role of National Highways, nationally and specifically in West Yorkshire. Nationally, 4 million car journeys are made per day on the strategic road network, covering 4,300 miles. Between 2020 and 2025, National Highways will invest £27.4 billion into its network through its Road Investment Strategy. The majority of investment will go towards network enhancement (£14.2bn) and operations, maintenance and renewals (£10.8bn).

SB noted that West Yorkshire has good connectivity for ports, trans-Pennine and up to the Scottish borders. Key schemes in West Yorkshire include; reducing traffic at M1/M62 Lofthouse, M621 junctions 1-7, the M621 noise barrier and A64 Hopgrove. Key regional points in delivering road services include one regional operations centre, three regional offices and four traffic officer outstations.

8. Questions and discussion

Q: It was noted that road users often find smart motorways difficult to use, yet more are being rolled out.

A: SB noted that while smart motorways are a hot topic, they are safe roads. He stated that he is keen on promoting further marketing to educate road users.

Q: Anthony Smith (AS) stated that while much was discussed on investment and technology, there was a lack of discussion on the people working for National Highways, such as traffic officers, people in control centres and contractors. He invited SB to elaborate.

A: SB explained National Highways' three internal imperatives: safety, customer satisfaction and improvement. People are core to these imperatives and continue to receive investment, with SB noting that they are currently recruiting on and off-road roles. Steps to harmonise management have also been taken.

9. Address by the Permanent Secretary, Department for Transport (followed by questions and discussion) – Bernadette Kelly CB, Permanent Secretary

Bernadette Kelly (BK) thanked JH for his welcome and invitation to today's meeting. She noted that while she was aware of the interest surrounding the Integrated Rail Plan, she could not discuss the topic due to its imminent publication. Regarding the City Region Transport Settlement for West Yorkshire, BK stated that £830 million had been announced for the region in the spending review and this would allow the region to take positive steps in reaching its vision for transport improvement.

BK noted that improving transport user experience is one of the top three priorities for the department. BK stated that buses have not always had the attention that they deserve nationally.

She highlighted work on 'Bus Back Better' as focusing on users at the heart of how service providers think about transport. BK also noted that Bus Service Improvement Plans, in partnership with operators, should have a positive impact on users.

Transport Focus plays an important role in championing users on national and regional levels, and so will have an important role to play in the creation of Great British Railways. BK noted that decarbonisation and reaching net zero are important priorities for the department, and that she is optimistic about progress made on zero emission vehicles in terms of acceleration of take-up and consumer confidence. She discussed her attendance at COP26 and highlighted the UK's role as a global leader in driving zero emissions in road transport. Current challenges include the need to rapidly expand EV charging capacity.

BK stated that Transport Focus can help the department to understand how to support users to make small, cumulative changes to reduce carbon emissions and advise the government on what is needed to help get people out of cars and into active travel habits – by making alternatives attractive, reliable and accessible.

Lorry driver experience has been catapulted to the forefront over the past couple of years, emphasising the importance of resilient freight and supply chain networks. Due to long term trends such as, poor working conditions and low wages, the number of HGV drivers has declined. However, BK noted that investments are being made to improve roadside facilities, wages and working conditions to attract more diverse people into the workforce.

BK expressed her thanks to Transport Focus for their work during the pandemic and for providing the department with useful, real-time data to understand public attitude through their reports and segmentation analysis.

Q: WP invited BK to discuss how much emphasis was being made by the Department on behavioural changes for users, as well as decarbonisation and investment.

A: BK noted that more people are using EVs, meaning that they require reliable charging while they are out and about. Users need to have confidence that they can charge their car in an emergency. Many EV charging points belong to the private sector or have incompatible charging plugs: these need to be considered in an integrated system. As more people use bikes as transport, the need to invest in cycle pathways will increase, and users need to know that such services are reliable and accessible.

BK noted that her team consists of behavioural as well as transport appraisal analysts. Transport Focus has unique insight into factors which can change and influence user behaviour, so there is an ongoing need to work closely together in this area.

Q: The relatively slow roll out of EVs in the UK were compared to Germany where electric freight fleets are being built. BK was invited to highlight if the UK were on track to deliver something similar soon.

A: BK noted that the UK are currently trialling similar technologies at present. She stated that the government have committed to all HGVs being net zero by 2040. Whilst achieving net zero for HGVs is more challenging due to their large size, the momentum generated in electric cars and vans and clear, regulatory targets are positive signs for achieving their goals.

Q: Rob Wilson (RW) noted user experience as one of the Department's top strategic priorities. He stated that improvement plans are reliant on central funding – congestion charging in London raised money for bus improvements, but few local government authorities have decided to pursue it. He invited BK to discuss reasons why this may be the case.

A: BK noted that congestion charges are difficult politically and that their usefulness depends on regional targets. While some cities have moved towards clean area zones, decisions are difficult as they are not always popular. However, congestion charges will play a greater role in local transport planning in future - London demonstrates their potential success in improving air quality and freeing up space for buses. A shift in public attitude is needed, and Transport Focus can play an important role in this.

Q: Trisha McAuley (TM) highlighted the importance of Transport Focus insight and invited BK to suggest anything else the organisation could do to help DfT and other departments to achieve their goals.

A: BK emphasised the importance of integrated accessibility in transport, so those with any form of disability can lead fully independent lives. She stated that Transport Focus do great work and encouraged the Board to continue working with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee. BK also noted that if gaps are observed or points misunderstood, that Transport Focus should share any insight they have.

Q: Arthur Leathley (AL) highlighted the challenge of long-term planning in transport, with short term evidence post-pandemic perhaps masking the long-term view. He invited BK to discuss how the department gets long term judgement right when planning with present data trends in the short term.

A: BK stated that large transport infrastructure projects can often last over 10 or 20 years, and as the duration of a project increases, the uncertainty surrounding it increases. Scenario planning ensures that plans are robust. BK noted that the department has strong scenario modelling and techniques to guide decision making. BK admitted that she cannot predict the future, but working with Transport Focus and other bodies allows the Department to undertake scenario planning and to gather intelligence on factors such as the recovery of leisure, work commuting and the economy.

Q: Theo de Pencier (TdP) noted the greater insight we now have on passenger numbers and invited BK to discuss whether rail freight capacity could be increased.

A: BK expressed a desire to consider rail freight more in her Department. The pandemic has highlighted freight and supply chain resilience, meaning freight strategy is a top priority at the moment. While railway capacity has increased due to passenger numbers, challenges to rail freight such as maintaining good infrastructure and routes remain. However, BK noted the opportunity for mode switching from road to rail for some freight remains substantial.

JH thanked BK and all other guests for their contribution to the meeting.

Part B : corporate affairs

1. Board meeting minutes: September 2021

The minutes of the Transport Focus Board meeting held on 21 September 2021 were **approved**.

2. Committee meeting minutes

2.1 Passenger Contact Group (October 2021)

WP expressed his gratitude to Keith Richards (KR) for chairing, and also his thanks to Jackie Ballard for her longstanding work. The minutes were **noted**.

2.2 Statistics Governance Group (October 2021) (including updated terms of reference)

RW thanked TdP for his stewardship of the Group up to and including its last meeting in September. The minutes were **noted**, and the updated terms of reference, **approved**.

2.3 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (October 2021)

Kate Denham (KD) expressed her thanks to Isabel Liu (IL) for her service to the Board and as chair of the committee up to and including its last meeting. The minutes were **noted**.

3. Reports from subsidiaries

3.1 Transport Focus Wales Limited (October 2021 and November 2021 update)

WP noted that discussions were held on complementary work with the Welsh government and a wide variety of stakeholders.

These included the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, and social media managers on improving communications for transport users. The minutes were **noted**.

3.2 Transport Focus Scotland (October 2021)

TM discussed key actions, highlighting the opportunity to improve stakeholder insight in Scotland. An event for next year is being considered to engage with stakeholders in a physical setting. TM highlighted a successful meeting with the Scottish Transport Minister to help formulate a 6-month work plan for Transport Focus in Scotland.

TM outlined findings by Transport Scotland analytical work, stating that Scotland will not meet its net zero targets without systemic behavioural change. She highlighted her experience at a major infrastructure conference and discussed being the only consumer voice in the room, as an example of how keen stakeholders were to get insights.

The minutes were **noted**.

4. For noting by the Board

Items previously discussed and/or approved out of meeting

The Board reconfirmed its **approval** of the following:

- BRD2122-008 #118 London Office Relocation RfC
- Formal approval of committee membership from 1 November 2021
- Transport Focus Workplan October 2021-March 2022

Closing remarks

JH thanked all attendees, Board members and staff for their time and contributions, noting the scale of ambition of the issues raised through the discussions held, and closed the meeting at 1259 hrs.

Signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Jeff Halliwell, Chair

Date