

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

At a remote meeting of the Transport Committee held remotely on Thursday, 4th March, 2021 the following Members were

P r e s e n t:

Councillor L Robinson
Chairperson of the Transport Committee
(in the Chair)

Councillors P Cleary, J Dodd, S Foulkes, G Friel, P Hayes, H Howard, A Jones, N Killen, A Lavelle, M O'Mara MBE, K McGlashan, P McKinley, L Mooney, S Murphy, N Nicholas, J Pearson, G Philbin, Stockton, J Stockton, H Thompson, M Uddin, J Williams and F Wynn

55. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chair noted that at the previous meeting some Members had experienced access issues and apologised to those who had been affected. Since the last meeting, Democratic Services had been working closely with the IT department to identify the issue which resulted from a Microsoft update. The issue relating to guest profiles had since been resolved and Officers apologised for any inconvenience this had caused.

56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence for this meeting.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

58. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 January 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

59. QUARTERLY BUS UPDATE

Matt Goggins, Assistant Director for Bus, provided the Committee with an update on the last quarter with a focus on the Bus Alliance and key bus projects.

It was explained that during the pandemic, the LCRCAs continued to work closely with bus operators through the local resilience forum. Patronage on services was being monitored against reduced capacity as a result of social distancing requirements. The Committee were advised that patronage currently stood at around 40% with service provision at over 80%.

In December, the city region was in tier 2 and patronage was closer to 70% of normal levels which officers found encouraging. The use of face coverings was an issue that the Committee had been raised previously and it was explained that regular joint

operations with Merseyside Police and the British Transport Police suggested that there was a high level of compliance amongst transport users.

With regards to the Bus Alliance, the Committee were advised that they continued to make good progress towards its milestones, notably the Hydrogen Bus and Green Routes projects. The installation of traffic signal bus priority on the 10a and 86 were now complete as well as RTI upgrades in Bootle and Huyton. With regards to the Green Routes project, members were advised that they would be engaged in the scoping process to identify highways interventions as plans emerge.

It was explained that some further work was needed on lease agreements for the Hydrogen Bus project and the business case would be submitted to the LCR Combined Authority in the coming months.

In relation to bus reform, Matt Goggins explained that the business case was underway and at around 85% completion and that the management case was being developed. The LCR Combined Authority was reengaging with a consultant to finalise the business cases and to qualify the impact of Covid on the bus market.

The Committee received an update on the City Centre Connectivity works and it was explained that improved customer information and network maps were planned.

Councillor Friel commended the TravelSafe team on the sterling work they had done to ensure PCSO provision was not cut in the last quarter. It was explained that Merseyside Police had presented various options in respect of the TravelSafe Partnership and this had resulted in an agreement to maintain the current levels of PCSO's.

Members requested further information on the audits being undertaken by the bus survey team during the pandemic. It was explained that the bus team were on the network throughout the day and were monitoring face covering compliance around peak travel times.

Councillor Nicolls noted that in section 3.7 of the report, a procurement was underway to support a specialist agency to improve customer information and concerns about the quality of the Arriva App were raised. Matt Goggins explained that Pinder was working with the LCR Combined Authority to improve customer information.

With regards to the first Green Bus Route it was explained that in order to meet the TCF deadlines, funds needed to be committed by 2023. The outline business case had been submitted and officers were working on the final business case before engaging with communities on the details. It was hoped that some of the first interventions would be introduced later in 2021.

Committee members queried if there would be the opportunity to see the hydrogen buses first-hand in a similar way to the Rolling Stock. It was agreed that this could be arranged once the buses were procured.

Councillor Stockton thanked the team for their hard work during the pandemic to keep the network running and paid tribute to the front-line workers helping to keep the travelling population moving over the last 12 months.

Members raised concerns over recent vandalism of bus stops in Kirkby and requested that the PCSO's working with TravelSafe look into the incidents. Matt

Goggins agreed that the incidents in Kirkby were serious and the withdrawal of services had significantly impacted bus users in that area. It was explained that the deployment of PCSO's was ultimately a decision of the police and officers were working to influence that on a weekly basis through operational meetings.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report be noted.

60. ASSET MANAGEMENT UPDATE MARCH 2021

Martin Draper, Head of Asset Management, provided an update on activities undertaken by Asset Management in the last 12 months focussing on maintenance delivery and technical services.

It was explained that the pandemic had impacted the main delivery team's maintenance activities as safety measures led to a 50% reduction in the 24/7 teams. As a result, the maintenance delivery programme had been reprioritised and would be reviewed once a full complement of staff was available.

It was reported that despite experiencing difficulties with social distancing requirements, the team had delivered 30 new and improved bus stops across the city region during the pandemic.

With regards to the tunnels it was explained that changes in vehicle technology over the next few years needed to be incorporated into the safety systems to ensure the assets were future proofed.

Councillor Stockton requested that any future updates to the Committee include an itemised view of the financial package against individual schemes.

Members raised concerns over climate change and severe weather events that could impact the tunnels. Martin Draper explained that a recent example of futureproofing against that risk was the cross gulleys at the Queens Way Tunnels which were designed for increased rain fall.

Councillor Wynn queried the cost of replacing damaged bus shelters as a result of increased vandalism. It was explained that it was difficult to incorporate any engineering design to mitigate against vandalism as it was a result of anti-social behaviour. The challenge was to identify different designs and materials without making the shelters less functional or unsightly. A map to identify the hot spots was underway and the Chair suggested that TravelSafe could use that information to find patterns.

Councillor Foulkes commended the team for keeping the LCR Combined Authority assets in good condition and facilitating the flow of traffic through the tunnels.

The Committee were advised that during the pandemic, over a million vehicles were utilising the tunnels a month which was around 50% of the usual patronage.

The Chair voiced his gratitude to the Asset Management team as part of the front-line key workers keeping the city region moving during the pandemic.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report be noted.

61. CONSULTATION ON MANCHESTER RAIL SERVICES

Tony Killen, Rail Development Advisor, provided an overview of the consultation underway regarding rail services across Manchester.

The report outlined some of the infrastructural issues that caused poor journey times, congestion and disruption in Manchester. It was explained that a task force has been established to try and improve services and a detailed analysis of the railway had been undertaken. The timetable review aimed to simplify the spacing and patterns for services with many current services running at irregular times. As a result, 3 options were proposed, and a draft response had been circulated to the Committee for comment.

It was explained that none of the proposals were sufficient for the city region with a key issue being the unjustified removal of the Southport- Manchester Piccadilly service. It was suggested that the disruption that the proposed options would cause was not proportionate or balanced when the journey time would only be improved by 30 seconds.

Members agreed that the removal of the Southport- Manchester Piccadilly service was not acceptable, and the duration of the consultation was criticised. There were concerns that any services lost would be difficult to reinstate. Councillor N Killen stated that increased capacity was needed on the network and that cancelling services would disproportionately effect Sefton residents.

The Committee raised concerns around disjointed services and how that impacted people with disabilities and limited mobility. It was suggested that the report be more explicit about the potential for increased public car use and the negative effect on the environment that could result from the proposed changes.

It was noted that as part of the Town Centres Fund, Southport had been identified as a location for investment and the railway station and services were necessary for enhancing that area.

The Chair asked that the response be amended to highlight the threat to connectivity in some of the proposed options such as stopping services across the Cheshire lines that could affect residents who commute.

RESOLVED - That the submission of a response to the consultation as detailed in Appendix A of the report, be approved.

62. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions were submitted to this meeting.

63. PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS

No petitions or statements were submitted to this meeting.

64. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR

The Chair noted that it was the last meeting of the municipal year and thanked members for engaging virtually over the last 12 months. It was hoped that the

vaccination roll out would be successful and allow lockdown measures to ease in the coming months and the Chair wished the Committee well.

Minutes 55 to 64 received as a correct record on the 15th day of July 2021.

Chairperson of the Combined Authority

(The meeting closed at 3.43pm)

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