

LCR TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the LCR Transport Committee held in the Authority Chamber - No.1 Mann Island, Liverpool, L3 1BP on Thursday, 13th January, 2022 the following Members were

P r e s e n t:

Councillor Liam Robinson
Chair of the Transport Committee
(in the Chair)

Councillors T Brough, J Burke, C Cooke, S Donnelly, G Friel, S Halsall, P Hayes, N Killen, A Lavelle, K McGlashan, L Melia, N Nicholas, D O'Connor, G Stockton, J Stockton and J Williams.

Attending remotely: Councillors J Banks, A Jones, S Foulkes, G Philbin, T Rowe and A Wall.

45. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson, wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He talked through the usual housekeeping arrangements and made a number of announcements.

Remote attendance

Councillors Jeanette Banks, Allan Jones, Steve Foulkes, Ged Philbin, Tommy Rowe and Andrea Wall were participating in the meeting remotely. He highlighted that Councillors who were taking part in the meeting remotely were doing so due to health reasons. Unfortunately, the Government had not changed the legislation and therefore, although they would be able to contribute to the discussions taking place in the meeting, they would not be able to vote.

New Committee Member

The Chair welcomed Councillor Andrea Wall, the new Halton Council representative, following the passing of Harry Howard. This was her first meeting of the LCR Transport Committee.

Frank Rogers

The Chair congratulated Frank Rogers, the recently retired Chief Executive of the LCR Combined Authority and Director General of Merseytravel on the award of a CBE in the New Year's Honours List. He commented that it was very much deserved for his years of service to Local Government.

Katherine Fairclough

The Chair also welcomed to the meeting, the new Combined Authority Chief Executive, Katherine Fairclough.

Shane Fitzpatrick

The Chair informed the Committee that Shane Fitzpatrick was retiring from the Combined Authority and today was his last working day. He paid tribute to Shane Fitzpatrick and

provided a summary of his career, particularly over the past 20 years, at Merseytravel and the Combined Authority. He listed a number of projects that Shane had been involved with and stated that he had been a key player in Merseytravel, the Combined Authority and the whole devolution journey over the past two decades. The Chair added that Shane was focussed on delivery and was also one of the most prepared and diligent people he had ever worked with. He indicated that Shane was looking forward to travelling around the British Isles. The Chair concluded by expressing a heartfelt thank you for everything Shane had done over many years wished him all the best for a long and happy retirement.

Councillor Ken McGlashan reinforced all that the Chair had said and added that Shane was a wonderful person who would talk through and explain every issue to Members in a logical manner so that it was understandable. He had known Shane for many years and he would be sorely missed.

Councillor Gordon Friel, the Vice-Chair, echoed the comments that had been made and added that a lot of transformational work had been done around transport under Shane's tenure.

Shane Fitzpatrick responded to the comments and was very appreciative of the kind words. He felt that it had been very fortuitous when he joined the organisation in 2000 as it was in 2001 when the money was been transferred into the Authority through the first Local Transport Plan. It had been a pleasure to work in and support the organisation, particularly over the last 10 years working with Members which had enabled him to gain knowledge and to be challenged. He had often looked to Members to seek their input to try and help with project delivery. He had been involved in millions of pounds worth of work over the years, either directly or indirectly, and felt that he had been fortunate as an engineer. He appreciated the trust that had been shown throughout his time with the Authority. He accepted the gift presented to him by the Chair with thanks.

Order of Business

The Chair advised that the order of business on the agenda would be revised. Item 5 on the agenda (Mersey Tunnels Tolls 2022/23) would be taken prior to item 4 (Budget Setting Report 2022/23) as the setting of the Tunnels tolls was required to be considered by the Committee before the Budget Setting report.

46. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Joe Pearson.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

48. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2021 were agreed as a true and correct record.

49. MERSEY TUNNELS TOLLS 2022/23

The Committee considered the report of Merseytravel which set out that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) was responsible for determining the level of tolls payable for use of the Mersey Tunnels. The report was intended to assist the

LCRCA by allowing the following issues to be explained and discussed by the Transport Committee and for a recommendation to be made to the LCRCA on the level of tolls. The report:

- (a) outlined the legal procedure for revising the level of the tolls;
- (b) summarised the current level of tolls; and
- (c) made proposals for the level of tolls payable in 2022/23.

John Fogarty, Executive Director of Corporate Services, introduced the report and explained that the role of this Committee was to consider all of the evidence around tolls and make a recommendation to the LCRCA. In setting the toll the Authority was guided by the Tunnels Act 2004 which set an authorised ceiling level. The purpose of this was to make sure tolls kept pace with public transport alternatives. The authorised toll level was £2.30 for a Class 1 vehicle which was significantly above the current cash toll of £1.80 and therefore the recommendation was not to move to the full authorised toll in one go but to increase this by 20p to £2.00.

John Fogarty explained that Members would also be aware that the Combined Authority's toll structure included a benefit for Liverpool City Region through a local discount scheme for residents made effective through a local fast tag. This would also increase by 20p next year, but it would remain 80p less than the cash toll and some £1.10 less than the maximum chargeable under the current Act. Other classes of vehicles would increase correspondingly.

John Fogarty referred to paragraph 3.14 which included the additional discounts that the Transport Committee had recommended over a number of years in respect of discounts for blue lights services, amongst other things. Those would remain the same for next year. The only change related to a long standing issue around the treatment of larger taxi and private hire vehicles. This could now be addressed as new technology had been adopted on the toll plaza and those larger vehicles would now be considered as Class 1 similar to other taxi and private hire vehicles.

John Fogarty concluded by stating that the increase in tolls would bring in additional revenue to support the wider transport network and support investment in public transport generally. A sum of money had also been earmarked for cross river bus services and in particular the affordability tickets on those services. This was still being worked through with bus operators to conclude the deal out of the proceeds for tunnel tolls next year.

Councillor Paul Hayes advised that he opposed the tunnel toll rises that were being proposed. He had previously opposed rises for those residents who lived outside the City Region and he opposed this double-whammy of toll rises for residents inside and outside of Merseyside as people coming into Merseyside contributed to the local economy and public services. He stated that the imposition of these toll rises would be a death knell to many businesses in the City Region and would squeeze household budgets further. If the economic harm that these rises would do was accepted, then he hoped that confirmation could be given for the tunnels to be absorbed into the national road network. He indicated that he would be moving an amendment to the motion that would put on record his belief that the toll should be abolished and that there should be a campaign for the Tunnels to be integrated into the national road network. It was a simple amendment that proposed the deletion of the increases in tolls.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Gordon Friel indicated that it was the Labour Party who had introduced the Tolls Act to ensure that the debt that had been accrued by all Local Authorities was brought to a cap. He called on the Government to look at the real hardship that had been created and take VAT off of fuel.

Councillor Ken McGlashan agreed that the Tunnels should be assimilated and brought into the road transport system and this had been suggested a number of years

ago. He advised that Councillor Steve Foulkes had brought it to the Government previously but it was refused. The Authority continued to try to bring the tolls down or get them abolished completely but the Government kept on refusing, therefore this Committee had kept the tolls below the authorised level that they should be.

Councillor Steve Foulkes stated that the tunnels were part of the Integrated Transport Network and it was illogical to try and remove them and treat them in isolation. He had called in the past for the tunnels to be in the Integrated Network. The Authority had a major responsibility in terms of safety and maintenance. It was a major engineering task to keep the tunnels running and therefore it needed to create income to support that. The tunnels were part of the network and whilst other forms of travel which crossed the river had been subject to major increases over the years, the track record of the tunnels over the last five years had been one of reduction in real net terms. It was important to encourage people to move from cars and therefore the covid recovery should not be a car based one but a public transport recovery. This had to be part of the overall budget process and if the amendment was carried then it would not be possible to set the budget and it would be necessary to look at other areas for savings. His view was that it would be foolhardy not to go for some form of increase. He felt that this was a fair and balanced recommendation and there were other contributors to the cost of living crisis e.g. energy costs. He stressed the fact that there had been no increase in toll fees for five years and he would therefore support the recommendation if he was allowed to vote.

Councillor Allan Jones failed to understand why after a few years of cuts the tolls were being increased when people are recovering from furlough and covid.

Councillor Sean Halsall felt that it was necessary to take into account the climate emergency. We cannot reward car drivers and punish users of buses and trains. He agreed that it was essential to balance the budget but that it was also important to get people onto the public transport network.

Councillor Chris Cooke speaking on behalf of the Green Party supported the proposed increase in fees. He also thanked Officers for responding very quickly to a request for information on maintenance and running costs. He felt that it would be helpful if a breakdown of costs could be included in such reports in future.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson agreed that it was a helpful suggestion. This information should be made available to the public as in effect they owned the tunnels. He thanked Members of the Green Party for engaging in the topic so diligently as this was something that all parties should be doing.

The Chair confirmed that he would not be supporting Councillor Hayes' amendment. In respect of taking the tunnels into the national road network this was something we had tried to do on numerous occasions and had always been refused by Government. The tunnels received no national taxational funding support and that was the reason that a toll structure was in place. He was disappointed by the fact that an amendment received at the eleventh hour did not seem to be a serious proposal. The papers had been published over a week ago and he asked why alternatives had not been put forward. This was also a decision which could not be taken in isolation as it was integral to setting the budget for the whole transport network. In most years it made a surplus which would then be reinvested back into the public transport network and was why the people in this city region had a better public transport network than in any other city region. He appreciated that the proposal would not necessarily be popular but in difficult circumstances he felt that it was the right proposal. He referred to the start of the pandemic when the Government had said to do whatever it takes and make sure you invest the resources required to get through the pandemic. Specifically in relation to the tunnels at the height of the pandemic, for the first time ever, the tolls had been lifted to support key workers and their essential journeys across the river which meant that revenue had been lost. However, when it came to settling the Covid bill funding had not been received from Government to backfill the revenue

required to lift the tolls at the height of the pandemic. Tunnels were very expensive things to own, maintain and operate and it was therefore necessary to balance the books in light of Covid.

The Chair also made reference to the climate emergency. In 2021 a company called Climate Central had produced their indicative flood maps for the world. Looking at the map for 2050 for the Liverpool City Region large parts of the north of the Wirral would be under water. Large parts of Sefton, Southport and almost as far as Kirby would be under water. Where we were sat today in the city centre would have been subsumed by the River Mersey. Half of the city centre would go as the Mersey would break its banks on both sides all the way up to Warrington. The water would go in as far inland as Halewood. That would impact on peoples' lives, peoples' homes and it would therefore be necessary to do something about that. One of the ways that we could address this was to move people away from traditional petrol and diesel transport to more sustainable and zero emission methods. As part of that, this year the best fleet of trains anywhere in the country would be introduced. There would be a better alternative in place for people to cross the river. Also in the next few weeks a report would be brought forward outlining ambitious plans to re-regulate the bus network by using devolved powers. This would mean that there would be a much better bus offer forthcoming. There had been a lot of investment in the ferries both at Seacombe and Woodside in looking at the future of the vessels. We were actually trying to make sure that there was the best possible alternative to cross the River Mersey but none of that would come cheap and required resource. It was recognised that circumstances for many were difficult but putting the tolls up by this modest amount was the right thing to do. It was not a case of trying to charge the maximum authorised amount because it was recognised that people were struggling. But due to the action that Steve Rotheram had taken as the Metro Mayor by reducing the cost of tolls for local residents through fast tag, we had now got 44% of users on that. The increase would take their charge to £1.20 which would be in line with the toll that was being paid in 2004. He accepted that an increase was never easy or popular but in difficult circumstances it was the right thing to do.

Councillor Paul Hayes moved and Councillor Tony Brough seconded the following amendment to the motion:-

To replace recommendation (c) with the following:-

- (c) recommend that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority implement no changes to the cash and fast tag tolls with effect from Friday 1 April 2022 so that the schedule of tolls will be: -

Vehicle Class	Authorised Toll 2022/23 (November RPI)	2022/23 Cash Toll	2022/23 Fast Tag Toll – LCR Resident*	2022/3 Fast Tag Toll – Non LCR Resident
1	£2.30	£1.80	£1.00	£1.80
2	£4.50	£3.60	£2.40	£2.40
3	£6.80	£5.40	£3.60	£3.60
4	£9.10	£7.20	£4.80	£4.80

*Liverpool City Region (LCR) resident defined as living within the electoral boundaries of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral;

A vote was taken on the amendment when there appeared:-

For the Motion – 2

Against – 15

The amendment to the Motion was lost.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote when there appeared:-

For the Motion – 15

Against – 2

The motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED – That balancing the different factors associated with setting the Mersey Tunnel tolls:

- (i) the contents of this report, be noted;
- (ii) the level of “authorised tolls” for the Mersey Tunnels as determined by the County of Merseyside Act 1980 (as amended by the Mersey Tunnels Act 2004), with details on calculation methods explained in section 3 of this report, be noted; and
- (iii) the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) be recommended to implement a schedule of tolls contained in Table 1 below with effect from Friday 1 April 2022:

Vehicle Class	Authorised Toll 2022/23 (November RPI)	2022/23 Cash Toll	2022/23 Fast Tag Toll – LCR Resident*	2022/23 Fast Tag Toll – Non LCR Resident
1	£2.30	£2.00	£1.20	£2.00
2	£4.50	£4.00	£2.80	£2.80
3	£6.80	£6.00	£4.20	£4.20
4	£9.10	£8.00	£5.60	£5.60

* Liverpool City Region (LCR) resident defined as living within the electoral boundaries of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral;

- (iv) the LCRCA be recommended to continue to offer the discounts/ concessions set out in paragraph 3.14 of this report for 2022/23; and
- (v) the LCRCA be recommended to allocate up to £500k as per paragraph 3.16 and to instruct officers to explore the opportunities of implementing toll discounts as a trial with the specific aim to encourage cross river public transport use, with the final approval of any specific trial discount to be delegated to the Director General, Merseytravel in consultation with the LCRCA Treasurer and the Monitoring Officer.

50. BUDGET SETTING REPORT 2022/23

The Committee considered the report of the Treasurer which detailed the draft revenue budget and capital programme for Merseytravel for 2022/23. The report also provided details of the prices/fares proposed for 2022/23 for approval. It also allowed Members to determine the revenue grants payable to Merseytravel in respect of general

operations and Mersey Tunnels for 2022/23 and make recommendations to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA).

Sarah Johnston, Assistant Director of Finance, introduced the report advising that the LCRCA had a statutory duty to agree a Levy for 2022/23 prior to 14 February 2022. To assist the LCRCA in its deliberations, the Transport Committee would consider Merseytravel's financial situation and recommend budget options.

Sarah Johnston added that the budget setting process for 2022/23 needed to be taken into context with the budget for 2021/22. The backdrop for the current financial year was very unique and there had been a great deal of uncertainty arising from the pandemic which saw a collapse in patronage in public transport and fare based revenue. Whilst patronage had improved it still remained below pre-covid levels as was income. So whilst some of the risks stemming from public transport had reduced they had not disappeared and there were some particular risks around bus and rail which had been detailed in Section 7 of the report.

Sarah Johnston advised that 2021/22 had been unique in a number of ways the requirement to rely on reserves to balance the budget was not. It was something that the Combined Authority and Merseytravel had had to do for the last couple of years. Against this backdrop the Authority had an aim to achieve a financially sustainable budget over the medium term without needing recourse to reserves to balance the budget. This had presented a challenge when setting a balanced budget for 2022/23. The approach taken was detailed in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report but broadly it had meant that increases to the budget had been limited from the 2021/22 budget, the impact of pay, the changes on special rail grants and to factor in any savings that could be found together with options for generating income. Adopting this approach Finance had worked with all Executive Directors, Heads of Service and Assistant Directors to develop budgets and all Members had been involved in getting to the position where a balanced and affordable budget could be put forward. The budget as proposed was detailed at Tables 1 and 2.

Sarah Johnston highlighted one change in respect of support services. In previous years the total costs of services had been shown such as Finance, Legal, Democratic Services, IT and HR within the Merseytravel budget. However, in practical terms a single seamless service was provided across both the Combined Authority and Merseytravel and to reflect that more accurately the budget had been apportioned between the two organisations for this year.

The report put forward proposals in respect of the fees and charges, detailed in Section 6 of the report. The proposed schedule of charges was set out in Appendix 3 to the report. It was also proposed that there should be an increase to bus station departure charges and again these charges had been kept flat in the previous year to reflect the impact of the pandemic.

In summary taking account of proposed increases income and savings that had been offered a budget for Merseytravel of £117.7m was proposed. There were two parts to that – there was a cost of operating the tunnels specific grant of £21.89m for 2022/23 and the second part was a more general grant to cover the costs of operating the wider transport organisation and to meet the costs associated with the rolling stock project scheme. It was proposed that for 2022/23 it was £95.83m. A balanced budget for the next financial year was being proposed, however, she referred to paragraph 4.10 of the report. Whilst a balanced budget had been achieved, the position over the next 4-5 years was less certain. There was an underlying need for further savings which would need to be addressed if the desired aim of being fully sustainable, without having to use reserves to prop up the revenue budget was to be achieved. There would be process undertaken once the budget had been set to look at how we could balance that budget over the medium term and Members would be involved with that process going forward.

Sarah Johnston referred to the Capital budget. The Capital Programme for 2022/23 was currently £140m which was broadly in line with the overall Capital Programme for the current financial year. In some service areas it looked like there was no investment to be undertaken. This was mainly due to the fact that there was a significant sum of money due to come through from the Combined Authority's Sustainable Transport Fund, although an overall settlement figure had been advised, a grant funding letter and a breakdown of funding by project for the next financial year onwards was yet to be received. As that information was not available at the present time, it had not been factored into the budget. Once more certainty was forthcoming the Capital Programme would be revised and brought back to Members for consideration. It was also proposed that a fund of £2.5m should be delegated to the new Executive Director for Place to work with the Heads of Service in Transport to recognise the fact that there were some schemes which did need to be undertaken for which we had no readily identifiable level of funding. Once the new Executive Director was in place this would be developed and information would be brought back to Members through the regular reporting.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Gordon Friel felt that some income figures seemed to be overly optimistic given the background of the financial situation across the country. He referred to page 37 of the agenda and specifically highlighted the income figures for Concessionary Travel and Mersey Ferries.

Sarah Johnston responded that with regard to Concessionary Travel, the budget needed to be considered in conjunction with the position over the last couple of years. There had been a requirement since the pandemic started to pay all operators based on pre-covid levels, irrespective of the level of patronage. The Department for Transport had subsequently released guidance which allowed from the next financial year, the realignment of payments with patronage so the reduction that could be seen was to allow us to bring our payments back more in line with the level of patronage.

Councillor Friel said that his understanding was that payment had been made on services provided rather than the passenger numbers on routes.

Sarah Johnston confirmed that since the start of the pandemic the Authority had been mandated as to the basis on which concessionary travel was paid and it had been broadly in line with what the operators had been receiving pre-covid.

In respect of Mersey Ferries, the Executive Director of Corporate Services, John Fogarty stated that the ferries forecast increase was from quite a low base because of Covid.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson added that in terms of Concessionary Travel reimbursements, the national formulas seemed to be unsatisfactory, and he thought that there should be more of a focus on pay per usage rather than negotiations that never seemed to achieve the best value for money for the taxpayer. Hopefully there were mechanisms that could be used to improve the system under devolved powers.

Councillor Paul Hayes asked how much funding the City Region would be receiving from Central Government from the Transport Settlement Fund (CRSTS) and the Levelling Up Fund.

Sarah Johnston replied that in relation to CRSTS there had been an indicative allocation of £710m over five years and Levelling Up was £40m.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson stated that the successful funding bids were testament to the hard work of Officers and the Government who had complimented the quality of the bids.

Councillor Sean Halsall extended his thanks to Officers, the Chair and Councillor Steve Foulkes for the vision to take forward how buses and trains would be dealt with in the future.

The Chair agreed that there was a lot more funding required to get Liverpool City Region to the position that London had enjoyed for decades. It added to the strong argument for devolution.

Councillor Ken McGlashan stated that Officers had projects ready in the pipeline and that was the reason why Liverpool City Region had received that level of funding. It proved that the Organisation was at the forefront of forward thinking.

Councillor Steve Foulkes pointed out that the grants received were project specific and not all of it would find its way into the core budget and would not solve the revenue issues. It might be possible to use some of that funding on the capital side in certain circumstances, but it would not assist with the day to day revenue issues in delivering a transport service. As Lead Member for Finance he noted that because of the uncertainty of Covid, reserves had been used to bolster the budget, but that could not go on indefinitely and it would be necessary to move into a new phase of budgetary discipline. The previous report would assist with the move into that phase of not using reserves much easier. He confirmed that he was looking forward to getting the budget on a sustainable footing without the use of reserves and with public and Member input. He welcomed the report as a beginning of that new phase of working.

Councillor Nathalie Nicholas queried Customer Delivery. She noted that Total Premises was set to decrease, and she asked for an explanation for that. The figure for 2021/22 was a bit higher than the forecast for 2022/23 - It dropped from £1,908,712 in 2021/22 to £1,774,712 in 2022/23.

Sarah Johnston responded that she would ensure that a more detailed response would be provided but broadly it was due to savings being taken and costs dropping off.

Councillor Allan Jones was fully supportive of the comments made in respect of devolution. There was a lot of potential in the North-West so he would fully support what had been said regarding devolution.

The Chair agreed with the comments made by Councillor Jones. When you looked at other areas which had devolved powers, both in this country and internationally, they had powers and responsibilities and funds. Liverpool City Region could do so much more if it was given the powers and funding it deserved. He appreciated the support shown by Councillor Jones and colleagues across party lines.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson thanked the team for all their hard work in setting a balanced budget. The set of papers had been relatively small, but they formed only one part of the wider Combined Authority budget. The report set out the challenges created by the pandemic and also highlighted some of the more difficult challenges ahead. It was noted that the Authority was not awash with reserves. Capital costs had also been referenced in the report and it could be seen that a good capital settlement had been allocated through the Sustainable Transport Fund bids. However, a significant revenue settlement was also needed from the Government and there was an opportunity to match the ambition that the City Region had in respect of the Bus Services Improvement Plan which had recently been submitted to Government.

The Chair also referred to the cost of living and the fees and charges as set out in the report. He felt that increases in ferry tickets and bus station departure charges had been appropriate and he was happy to confirm that the supported bus fares had not been increased as many people who depended on those buses could not afford an alternative such as a car. The cost of living crisis tended to affect the most vulnerable and therefore it was essential that an affordable approach to bus services and ticketing was in place. He commended the report to the Committee.

RESOLVED – That:

- (i) the Combined Authority be requested to approve 2022/23 operating grants for both public transport and Mersey Tunnels operating activities as detailed in section 4 of this report;
- (ii) the decision in respect of fares/prices included within this report, be approved; and
- (iii) the Combined Authority be requested to approve the capital programme as detailed in section 5 of the report.

51. QUARTERLY BUS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report the Assistant Director for Bus which provided an update to Members of the Transport Committee on key bus issues relating to the third quarter of 2021/22. Specifically, the report sought to provide an update on the milestones of the Bus Alliance, report progress on the assessment into Bus Reform, Hybus Trial Project and Green Bus Routes Programme, along with an overview of how the Bus Team continued to work with bus operators to support the maintenance of a safe and reliable bus network whilst dealing with the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Laura Needham, Bus Strategy Programme Manager, presented the report and highlighted the following:-

- Current patronage levels on the network averaged around 80%. Covid sickness rates across garages was 12-16% and face covering compliance was around about 88%;
- The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) had been submitted to Government on 31 October 2021 with a total ask of £667.4m over three years. It set out 10 potential projects which would transform the bus services across the city region and would ensure that bus played a real part in the recovery from Covid;
- Work with the Bus Alliance continued to deliver an improved bus service and they were heavily involved in the development of the BSIP;
- Work that had been undertaken with relevant constituent Local Authority partners to agree the measures proposed for the Liverpool to St Helens bus route as part of the 'Green Bus Routes' programme;
- A separate report would be brought to the Combined Authority meeting on 21 January 2022 to approve the funding for the Prescott Bus Station and bus borders;
- Considerable progress had been made on the LCR 'Hybus' trial project, particularly with regard to the lease and payment schedules with operators;
- The contract for the manufacture of the new fleet had been won by Alexander Dennis and the procurement of the fuel contract would be led by Arriva, although the Combined Authority remained heavily involved in supporting it;
- Draft designs were complete for the interior of the bus and the final purchase order would be made by 31 January 2022. In addition a draft business case for the DfT Zebra scheme had been submitted and if successful, the bid would increase the number of buses in the project from 20 up to 43 in addition to funding for the hydrogen fuel and depot upgrade;
- In Quarter 3 work streams had continued to progress individual elements of the Bus Reform business case and a series of market engagement sessions with operators had taken place. Stakeholder sessions had commenced in preparation for the Combined Authority meeting on 4 March where the business case would be considered;
- The Customer Information Team had been working on a new Liverpool Area Map and installation of frames at Belle Vale Interchange and the display of both Liverpool Area Maps and the Belle Vale Interchange Map had commenced. Following this, development work on the Area Map for Wirral was next; and
- A fleet of electric vehicles had been procured for the use by the Bus Team and other teams and relevant officers had taken part in a driving course.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson invited questions and comments from Members.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Gordon Friel referred to the Open Bus Programme and asked if there was any further information. It was a very important project in trying to get London style information as in the past, real time information screens had been slightly out of sync or in some cases it had taken a long time to get repairs undertaken. He also asked when the complex fares were likely to be achieved and what progress had been made. A further report on it would be useful. Laura Needham responded and confirmed that she could provide an update report on that.

Councillor Nina Killen thanked Laura Needham for the update. She was pleased to see the 'Violence against Women and Girls' Strategy mentioned in the report, getting priority and attention. Councillor Killen advised that the 'Violence against Women and Girls' Strategy had been published by the Government in July 2021 and there were Transport Champions appointed. Whilst this report focused on buses, the issue was across the whole of the transport network including walking. It wasn't just a case of making the network safe but also the perception of making women and girls feel safe on the network. Women and girls made up 51% of the population, therefore it was an important issue and making it safe for women and girls made it safe for everybody. There had been some round table discussions in November and stakeholders had been asked to input. She presumed that had happened and asked what the Combined Authority's contribution had been to those discussions and what were the issues being seen on the network in the City Region. Councillor Killen asked to see the feedback from that session when it was available. Laura Needham confirmed that she would provide an update and advised that the round tables had looked at safety on trains and buses.

Councillor Nathalie Nicholas referred to page 55 of the agenda in terms of the 'Bus Back Better' campaign and the priorities were good. As a bus user she asked about the Passenger Charter, when it would be coming out, how people could engage in it and what impact it hoped to achieve.

Laura Needham responded and stated that the Passenger Charter would set specific standards across the whole of the bus network and operators would work with the Combined Authority to us to develop it. Initial talks had taken place with Stagecoach and Arriva who were supportive and work would commence soon on the development of the Charter.

Councillor Nicholas asked if Committee Members could be kept informed as it would enable them to disseminate this information to the community in order to get more people engaged and on the buses. She also suggested that a timeframe would be helpful.

Councillor Lindsay Melia made reference to 'Hybus' and zero emission buses and asked if they would be accessible. She also asked about the consultation process for passengers and the public as it was important to engage with wheelchair users and people with different access needs.

Laura Needham advised that focus groups had already been undertaken to get ideas for the layout of the bus and what was important for passengers. The Bus Team had looked at the successful engagement process used on the 'Rolling Stock' Programme in order to utilise good practice. The specification for the buses was high and conformed to all the highest requirements. There were two wheelchair spaces on the buses and the latest designs included additional lighting and glazing to make the passenger experience comfortable.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson indicated that the update had been useful and it would be beneficial to have more information on how passengers were being included in the procurement process for 'Hybus' to ensure that passengers were at the heart of decision making.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Gordon Friel welcomed the configuration of the buses to include two wheelchair spaces. He questioned whether two spaces were sufficient and whether it would be useful to look at installing collapsible seats.

Laura Needham confirmed that she would note the information and share it with relevant Officers.

Councillor Jeanette Banks was pleased that patronage was back to 80% on the buses, however, she noted that there were going to be cuts to the weekend and evening services due to the loss of drivers. She asked what was being put in place to resolve this. She also hoped that a report would be commissioned to look at reinstating these bus routes once the issue was resolved. These cuts were detrimental to the residents and people who relied on these services and it would have an impact on getting more people to use the bus network rather than a car. She hoped that Members could be updated on any future outcomes.

Laura Needham advised that Officers were working closely with the Operators and monitoring driver absences and the Operators themselves were putting policies in place to deal with the situation. She confirmed that she would keep Members updated.

Councillor Ken McGlashan commended the report. He referred to paragraph 3.8.1 on page 58 of the agenda regarding safety and the problems which had been experienced in Lydiate Lane, Halewood. He commended the way that the Travel Safe Board had worked together to get the issue resolved and he thanked all those involved.

Councillor McGlashan also referred to the Customer Charter and stated that something similar had been in place years ago. He mentioned Area Forums, whereby Members and Officers used to travel around the region and the public were invited to ask questions on bus, trains, and ferries issues. He felt that it was a shame that they were longer in place as it enabled the public to converse directly with Operators.

Councillor Paul Hayes commented that it was good to hear that the Metro Mayor would be announcing shortly how he would use the powers given to him by the Government in relation to the bus network. He asked how the Committee would be engaged in that process given the short timescale.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson confirmed that sessions were being arranged for early February 2022 for this Committee, as well as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that full engagement could take place before decisions were taken. It was a huge topic and was vital for how a first-class public transport network could be put in place as a genuine alternative to the car.

Councillor Sean Halsall referred to the comments on engagement with the public and operators and asked how much engagement had taken place with Trade Unions. A lot of union members were bus drivers and had a lot of expertise and knowledge to share as part of that engagement.

Laura Needham confirmed that there was a mechanism by which the trade unions discussions were engaged on both projects and general bus issues and that in individual project engagement had taken place directly with drivers, for example on 'Green Bus Routes' project where bus drivers had been directly involved to identify pinch points on routes and feedback on improvements to bus services. Through the operators drivers and Trade Unions had also been engaged on the 'LCR Hybus Trial' project .

Councillor Damien O'Connor referred to the issue of driver shortage and asked why St Helens seemed to have been hit particularly hard in respect of changes to routes. He asked if the issue was about driver shortages or did it relate to low patronage and problems with operator contracts.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson felt that it would be more appropriate to have a separate session to look at this in more detail and to include St Helens representatives on the Committee with Councillor John Stockton as Lead Member for Bus.

Councillor Anthony Lavelle praised the work being undertaken by the Team in the background, in particular, issues such as the abuse of women and girls. He mentioned the Passenger Charter and asked if there was any way that Members could input into that document so that it was not just Officer led. He also raised concerns about cuts to services and stated that he needed to be made aware of any cuts in his area and the reasons behind it.

Laura Needham confirmed that she would welcome Member input and work around shaping the Charter had not yet started. She was aware that the individual operators had a Customer Charter, but it was proposed to bring them together to ensure relevance for the City Region. She undertook to look into the comments made about cuts to services and ask Jeanette Townson and her Team to examine methods of communication.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson was pleased to see progress in the development of a Passenger Charter but felt that it needed to have the right level of flexibility and powers. It should give people appropriate consumer rights. He also referred to the current service reduction and driver shortage which in part was due to failings within the DVLA around the legal certification for new drivers. He was concerned about the current situation with Covid and the way that emergency timetables were communicated as it was helpful for passengers to know when and where the bus network was running. He appreciated that things often changed on a daily basis, but it was essential to look at how that was communicated in the round. He also thanked Officers for all the hard work within the Bus Team.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report be noted.

52. MERSEY FERRIES PIER HEAD TERMINAL

The Committee considered the report of Merseytravel which advised Members on the public consultation exercise recently undertaken in respect of the renaming of the Mersey Ferries Pier Head Terminal and sought endorsement of the next steps associated with this renaming process

John Fogarty, Executive Director of Corporate Services, introduced the report by stating that following the sad loss of Gerry Marsden in 2021, an individual who was synonymous with the City Region, it was proposed to re-name the Pier Head Ferry Terminal as a lasting tribute in recognition of Gerry's association with the ferry across the Mersey.

The proposal to re-name Pier Head Ferry Terminal to the 'Liverpool Gerry Marsden Ferry Terminal' was considered by Merseytravel in July 2021. A public consultation exercise was undertaken and following consideration of the results it was agreed to continue with the re-naming proposal. The Marsden Family have welcomed this proposal and were consulted throughout the process.

The Committee were requested to endorse the decision of Merseytravel in this respect.

The Chair invited questions and comments from the Committee.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Gordon Friel commented that he could not imagine it being called anything else and it was a wonderful tribute to a man that we should all be very proud of.

Councillor Jerry Williams stated that the influence that Gerry Marsden and his music had throughout the Liverpool City Region and internationally was huge. Gerry Marsden's music was iconic and pledged his full support for the recommendation.

Councillors Ken McGlashan and Allan Jones echoed the sentiments and agreed with the proposal.

RESOLVED – That:

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) the decision by Merseytravel in respect of the renaming of the Mersey Ferries Pier Head Terminal to “The Liverpool Gerry Marsden Ferry Terminal” be noted and endorsed.

53. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been received.

54. PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS

No petitions or statements were submitted for this meeting.

55. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR

There were no urgent items of business.

Minutes 45 to 55 received as a correct record on the 10 day of March 2022.

Chair of the Transport Committee

(The meeting closed at 3.45 pm)