York Bus Forum – Members Monthly Meeting 17.30-19.00 Tuesday 18th July 2023, by Zoom

Attending: Doreen Magill (Chair), Graham Collett (Vice Chair), Niall McFerran (Secretary), Alan Robinson, Gail Shuttleworth, Roger French, Peter Kitchin, Christine Cooke, Duncan Millar, Eden Blyth, Terry French, Debbie Cobbett, Glen Simpson, Kevin Fradley, Jim Forrest, Roger Pierce, Catherine Odell, Iris Wells, Andy Gibbons (Speaker) Tony Hudson, Jason Murgatroyd, Cllr. P. Kilbane, Diana Robinson, Carol Green, Andy D’Agorne, Lionel Lennox, George Wood, Richard Parker and Michael Howard (CYC).

1. The Chair welcomed new delegates, in particular Cllr. Kilbane the newly elected Exec. Head of Transport. Apologies have been received from; Mary Cannon, Robin Jorriman, John Slaughter, Debby Cobbett, Dave Merrett, Dee Boyle, Flick Williams, and Barry Connor.
2. Minutes of last meeting will be changed to read the No.11 to Ashley Park instead of Bishopthorpe.
3. Matters arising –

Services making extra stops at Clifford Street – MH confirmed this is under consideration.

DR asked if there is any news on the City Centre Shuttle bus, ADA responded that no further information is available, we should be pressing for information.

1. Presentation by Andy Gibbons, Partnership manager at Leicester City Council, previously managed the improvements to Nottingham’s bus network.

Leicester has a population of around 600,000 with low car ownership in the centre but high in the suburbs. Cheap city centre car parking deters bus use. Most employment outside the city centre, but University, Hospitals and sporting venues are major influencer on transport needs as they are in the middle of the city. It is a unitary authority with well-defined boundaries and political stability.

There is no one dominant bus operator, 95% of journeys operated on a commercial basis. There are failings in the orbital and suburban bus networks despite high congestion on ring roads. There are no large two-way passenger flows that would justify a tram or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) set-up. Well developed Enhanced Partnership includes an eight-year plan to electric buses/better frequency/improved reliability/ easier access and great value. There is currently no case for bus franchising in the city. Despite receiving no BSIP money they aim to improve bus use by 13% over eight years and have satisfaction levels of over 90%. The aim is to have electric buses on P&R routes and half buses converted by mid-2024.

They operate a city centre shuttle bus around the key sites which runs every 10 minutes and is free, this has proved popular and demonstrates that passengers will change buses provided they are frequent. They use three buses making 1,000 trips daily.

Most corridors support competitive services with co-ordinated timetables. They have high rates of reliability and bus priority lanes on many radial routes.

There is a new bus station and good supply of real time information boards, they also have 500 new shelters.

To improve value, they offer ‘Scholar Tickets’ and discount fares for the unemployed and families. They operate fare capping and NHS workers use P&R for free.

The issues are the long gestation period for new bus priority schemes, the changes in commuting and shopping habits and a County Council unwilling to support rural routes that connect with city. Current bus use 85% of pre-Covid levels.

His advice was to keep things local, use political support to maintain momentum and not be deflected from the process of improving the bus network. Franchising, in his view may reduce motivation to improve. There should be a requirement to appoint a Head of Buses.

Local authorities will produce better growth with BSIP delivery, and the money should be focussed on those areas with good potential.

Concessionary fares need to be reviewed and accessibility needs a binding framework.

ADA asked how successful the Hospital service was? AG advised that it was highly successful, but it also encourage some people to walk. The fact that people were using a bus interchange system had led to the withdrawal of two cross city services.

DR commented that the buses do not connect directly with the rail station, AG said this was because of the road network.

GC have you seen less concessionary fare use since Covid? AG replied yes particularly on outlying services.

NM asked how reliable the electric buses in service are? AG responded that the original buses had problems, but they are now buying Chinese buses through a UK agent, Pelican in Castleford.

DMag. thanked Andy for his excellent and thoughtful talk.

1. Report on EP and First meetings - E.P. GC confirmed that the last Forum meeting was unsatisfactory and will voice concerns regarding the current structure.

The meeting with First was a success, notes will be available. It was well attended by the operator with plenty of action points arising. This is part of a program of regular meetings.

1. Response to fare increases.

It was suggested that a cash differentiated tariff is a national strategy resulting from the increased cost of handling money.

ADA suggested that the operators/CYC produce a card which can be loaded with funds at local outlets.

RF asked if the new fares which favour tap on tap off payments also apply to contactless? This needs clarification as many passengers use contactless rather than TOTO. He then confirmed that the lower fares only apply to passengers using TOTO.

ADA the strategy is to push customers towards TOTO but this needs better communication and information.

GC agreed that communication is poor, and this had been brought up at the First meeting.

ADA also commented that TOTO can’t be used by people without debit cards such as children! This penalises families travelling.

RP commented that TOTO works well when buses have separate entrance and exit doors such as in London, but the system is less effective when passengers use the same door for both and is likely to increase the boarding/exiting times.

1. AOB –

RF reported that we have been supplied the requested data on bus stop use in Merchantgate but it had arrived too late to properly analyse. He invited MH to run through information.

MH confirmed that this is raw data from original study which will be repeated when students return in the autumn.

DMag asked MH to confirm that this is one days’ data from April, it was agreed.

GS asked if there is a better layout available with people and times separated? MH happy to supply.

1. The next meeting will be Tuesday 15th August.