**York Bus Forum – Members Monthly Meeting 17.30-19.00 Tuesday 16th July 2024, by Zoom**

Attending: Niall McFerran (Vice Chair) Acting Chair for this meeting, Roger French (Finance and Membership), Graham Collett, Dave Merrett, Tony Hudson, Catherine Odell, Glen Simpson, Stuart Fillingham (EY Buses), Tom Donnelly (EY Buses), Wayne Blackburn, Richard Parker, David Stuart, Jason Murgatroyd, Dee Boyle, George Wood, Duncan Miller, Robert West, Ian Anderson, Toby Hart, Eden Blyth, Diana Robinson, Nick Murray, Tom Horner (City of York Council), John Bibby, Stephen Fenton, Carole Green, Christine Cooke and Mary Fairbrother.

1. In the absence of the Chair Doreen Magill taking a well-earned break Niall McFerran chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Niall informed attendees that at the August meeting Julian Ridge from City of York Council would be giving a presentation and taking comments on the Local Transport Plan and in September David Hern from the North Yorkshire and York Combined Authority would be the speaker.

Niall would welcome suggestions for speakers and topics for future meetings.

Apologies had been received from Doreen Magill, Andy D’Agorne, Flick Williams, Gail Shuttleworth, Robin Jorimann, Terry French, Mary Cannon, Lionel Lennox, Anna Courtier (First Bus), Roger Pierce, Jim (HARBUS),John Hart and Kevin Fradley.

1. Minutes of the 18th June meeting and matters arising not on the Agenda.

The minutes were agreed and there were no matters arising.

1. Enhanced Partnership (EP) Meeting 11th July 2014

Niall reported that the main items discussed were:

* BSIP Funding- the timeline and process
* Station frontage- latest position as per agenda item 4
* Dial a Ride- Councillor Stephen Fenton said that the cross party Task and Finish Group report with recommendations had gone to the Economy, Place and Scrutiny subcommittee of the City Council and from there to the Full Council.
* The key recommendation was to put in place a replacement service though there was a debate to be had on the exact provision of the service and discussions were taking place with parties such as the hospital and Age Concern.
* It may be that the eligibility criteria would need to be relaxed to make the service more affordable and increase demand and Stephen stressed the importance of the budget consultation process for the next financial year.
* Questioned by Ian Anderson , Stephen said that the choice was between providing a Shuttle Bus Service or Dial a Ride and the recommendation from consultants was that the Shuttle Bus service should not go ahead
* This perplexed members who pointed out that the Dial a Ride service was about getting people into the City Centre whilst the Shuttle Bus was about moving people around the City Centre and it should not be an either or choice..
* Dee Boyle remarked that if either the Shuttle Bus or Dial a Ride were approved they must be better publicised than previous schemes to boost take up.
* Diana Robinson pointed to the Transport Plan pledge to improve accessibility.
* Moving on Niall reported that on behalf of York Bus Forum he had requested that the EP be provided with passenger data, subject to commercial confidentiality, as the experience of the last two years was substantial amounts of BSIP funding yet progressively reduced services, the latest of which was to the 13 service to be discussed under item 8, and it was important to understand demand trends and look for ways to boost demand.
* John Bibby suggested York Bus Forum draw up a Minimum Data set requirement.
* Niall and Tom Horner had discussed representatives from the Passenger Liaison Group attending York Bus Forum meetings.

1. Station Gateway-Graham Collett expressed continuing frustration at access to and from the station, accessibility on to buses, the no of bus stops and noted that there was also concern at the Combined Authority at the lack of capacity at the station.

A meeting had been promised for over two months by Brendan Murphy without progress and Tom Horner pledged to arrange a meeting as a priority.

Niall reported that at the EP reference had been made to proposals for extra stops at the back of the station and Dave Merrett pointed out that these had been included in the original planning application for replacement rail services

John Bibby and others suggested that the infrastructure at the station needed to be future proofed if CYC aspired to meet its targets for passenger numbers by 2030 and Dave Merrett noted that a new subway and more closely integrated bus and railway interchange were key parts of the proposals that Alan Robinson formulated on behalf of the Bus Forum and had shared with the Council.

On a positive note Niall reported that Richard Hampson from CYC had informed him that information boards for bus users were to be placed in the station portico and the tram shed opposite the station.

Nick Murray asked what additional services were planned to cater for York Central and whether these would impact on the station area.

Tom Horner explained that the bus stop infrastructure and information screens etc. had been ordered and CYC were looking for section 106 funding from the developers to support the services initially whilst demand was built up as it was important that the area be kept as car free as possible to minimise congestion.

Niall informed the meeting that members of the Committee would be walking round the various main City Centre bus stop locations with Tom Horner on 2 August to point out their observations/concerns. Tony Hudson informed members via the chat that the no 10 had now reverted to using the Banana Warehouse stop which meant it was right next to a demolition site and urged it must be visited as a priority on 2 August.

1. City of York Council issues–
2. Use of Clifford Street stop

Tom Horner reported that the tenders for supported services were out to tender and for those services that used Clifford Street it may be possible to influence bus companies to use the Clifford Street stops but for commercial services it was a decision for bus companies.

Members noted that East Yorkshire had been proactive and were using the stops in Clifford Street. Niall noted that the issue would be taken up direct with First bus at the meeting to be held in August (see agenda item 6).

1. Bus waiting times Stonebow and Station

Roger French noted that Doreen Magill had sent information relating to the Coastliner re the extended times at Stonebow and the timing shown on information board allowing a 20 minute journey between the station and Stonebow. In practice it seemed that buses were leaving the station earlier than shown on the Boards and waiting much longer than the 6 minute time shown on paper timetables, and Doreen reported that buses were showing information on their front such as 12 minutes to departure. These extended times were causing congestion and difficulties for other services and passengers using Stonebow.

Roger would forward the information to Tom Horner to investigate.

Toby Hart noted that at the station many of the issues were caused by University buses which were not scheduled seamlessly and gave examples of the non- reality of the scheduling e.g. excessive journey times allowed between Rougier Street and the station resulting in buses arriving early and waiting at the station causing issues for other services and bus passengers.

Opinion was expressed that greater scrutiny of this issue should be undertaken by CYC officers before signing off timetable changes.

1. Bus stop information – Blossom Street westbound.

Roger French understood from a member who uses this stop that the information screens and paper timetables had not been available at this stop for a considerable period. Tom Horner noted the development works in the area and would report investigate to establish the current position.

1. Electronic Screens, excessive downtime- lack of up to date information
2. Incompatible information on electronic screens, app and paper timetables

There was a lengthy discussion on these issues with members giving examples of issues at stops on a number of routes and locations of out of date paper timetables not reflecting timetable changes, paper timetables and electronic screens showing different departure times, buses disappearing from screens after they were due and Tom explained verbally the different responsibilities of the City Council, bus operators and West Yorkshire combined authority who post updates to the electronic information screens. Tom offered to send a document outlining the respective responsibilities for circulation to members.

In response to Duncan Miller, Tom agreed to send details of the locations of the electronic screens due to be put in place in the August and November rounds of implementation screens funded via BSIP.

Re the frequency of timetable changes Niall pointed out that the agreed 6 per year was excessive in the view of YBF but there also seemed to be more taking place at the discretion of City Council officers. This resulted in passengers faced with ever changing services and being put off from using the bus leading to a downward spiral of reduced services, especially on evenings.

Toby Hart gave as an example the no 10 changes to be implemented from this weekend, following changes in June. The coming changes introduced large gaps in service in both directions, and there would be a 100 minute gap from Stamford Bridge at a time passengers would wish to come into York for an evening out and an 80 minute gap from Poppleton into York (150 minute in the case of the Leeman Road stop)..

Toby asked Tom whether the Council are aware and did they give permission as it was his understanding that the City Council gave support funding to the evening no 10 service. Tom undertook to investigate and come back.

Tony Hudson asked, whether East Yorkshire could enhance their services on the X47, including to Pocklington and Stuart Fillingham agreed to investigate.

1. Service 412 inadequate peak time service into York

Nick Murray explained that the 412 Wetherby to York service operates Monday to Friday with 5 services each way but does not serve Knapton.

North Yorkshire Council fund a minibus early morning/ late evening to serve Knapton and the no 59 Park and Ride since reopening gives Knapton residents an option for those with a car. Residents also had the option of a 20 minute walk to the 5/5a to/ from Beckfield Lane but services had been cut back and was in any case unreliable which was driving people away from using the bus.

Funding for the minibus was due to run out at the end of the financial year and Nick felt this was a matter for the Combined Authority to look at as it encompassed cross boundary issues from North Yorkshire into York and members agreed that such issues needed to be addressed.

1. Park and Ride.

A discussion followed, in the light of the Park and Ride services being due for tender for the service from 2025 onwards, on the potential to increase the stops served by the Park and Ride services, especially on evenings and Sunday, to enhance the frequency of buses and increase patronage to help the City meet its targets to increase bus usage.

Roger French advocated the no 3, which as Graham Collett correctly noted, had stopped along Tadcaster Road on evenings pre-pandemic, should stop at least from St Edward’s Church/ Cross Keys southwards on evenings and Sundays to better serve the residents of Dringhouses and Stephen Fenton confirmed that as a Councillor he had pursued increasing the number of stops for the number 3 including to serve significant employers in the area.

David Stuart noted that the number 2a) provides an all stop service in the evening so asked why the nos 3, 8 and 9 could not do the same.

It was agreed that this discussion needed to be factored into the considerations when drawing up the specification for the next Park and Ride tender.

1. First Bus issues-

The absence of a First Bus representative was noted with disappointment as was the continuing lack of meaningful engagement with the Bus Forum despite the efforts of Anna Courtier. Wayne Harrison understood that a meeting was to be held between First Bus officers and the Bus Forum which Roger French pointed out was not until 15th August due to First Bus unavailability before that date.

Niall referred to the issue of First Bus increases for school services which had been raised at the EP Forum. The First representative at the Forum had agreed to come back on the issue but had not yet done so.

Niall indicated that he had been told by First that they are making progress on making space for a second wheelchair space on the single decker buses to be procured from Wrights.

1. Coastliner- As per last month Doreen Magill Transdev had still not provided a contact. Toby Hart would try to source a contact.

The lack of engagement by bus companies other than East Yorkshire was noted.

1. Service 13- Connexions timetable and accessibility.

A new timetable based on 45 minute intervals between buses is to be introduced from 22nd July following the ceasing of the temporary City of York Council funding. The timetable is based on using 3 buses and the operator believes this will enable the service to be sustained. Services to West Nooks and Flaxman Croft are re-instated though Graham Collett noted that Flaxman Croft only appeared to be served on a Saturday on services coming from York.

Concern was expressed that 45 minute timings were not easily understandable for passengers and Richard Parker noted that on the number 11 service provided by First Bus the interval was an 50 minutes which must be a bar to passenger uptake.

Concern was expressed by David Stuart over the timings at York College

1. AOB

Diana Robinson noted that she had completed a paper questionnaire at a bus stop a few weeks ago. Tom Horner noted it would have been the annual survey carried out by Transport Focus and agreed to ask them to present their results once available.

Richard Parker asked who decided to changes to the numbering of timetables which were also a cause of confusion to passengers. Stuart Fillingham explained in the case of the recent supported services taken over under contract from North Yorkshire the naming rights to Castle Line were held by Transdev necessitating a change and the numbering of the other routes was changed to avoid confusion with pre-existing route umbers on other services provided by East Yorkshire.

Diana responded that the timetables for the 80/81/82 were very clear and helpful

Stuart Fillingham suggested inviting a future speaker from the Confederation of Passenger Transport on accessibility and Niall agreed to pursue this.

1. Date of next meeting 20th August.