

CPT Sheffield Plan Response – October 2020

Introduction

The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) is recognised by the Government as the UK trade body for bus and coach operators with in excess of 90% of bus fleet, and 70% of coach fleet within its membership numbering around a thousand business members.

The bus and coach sector is committed to working with local authority partners on meeting the stated vision of the Sheffield Plan - namely that “In 2038 Sheffield will be a fair, inclusive and sustainable city.”

The bus and coach sector is also committed to working with local authority partners on working towards, and helping to achieve the aims of the Sheffield Plan:

- Aim 1: A fair ,inclusive and healthy City
- Aim 2: An environmentally sustainable City
- Aim 3: Thriving neighbourhoods and communities
- Aim 4: A strong economy
- Aim 5: A vibrant City Centre
- Aim 6: A connected City
- Aim 7: A green City
- Aim 8: A well designed City

Recognising the Benefits of Bus and Coach in Local Planning and Policy

It is vital that the planning system promotes the importance of public transport provision – in particular bus and coach - in both new and existing developments, to support the aims of the Sheffield plan including meeting the Climate Emergency Declaration of being carbon neutral by 2030.

The Government recognised the important role of public transport in delivering its decarbonisation agenda in its framework document for the National Transport Decarbonisation Strategy published in March 2020 which states: "Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less and be able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network." The plan and the policies from the Local Authority needs to facilitate this by making the provision of public transport and active travel infrastructure a requirement of future developments.

Buses are also crucial to (Aim 1) a fair, inclusive and healthy City. Effective and relevant bus networks and services remain key to securing increases in productivity and social inclusion across localities. Outside London local bus patronage has returned as much as three times quicker than the



railway through COVID. This shows the wider and deeper relevance of buses for mobility across all geographies and sections of society.

Substantial mode shift to bus and coach, alongside walking and cycling, is key to unlocking a healthy, carbon-free travel transformation in Sheffield.

Reducing congestion on our roads is critical. The economic costs of congestion are at least £11 billion per year in urban areas in England. Journey time using public transport must be consistent even during peak traffic flows to be an attractive competitor to car use. The perception (especially to a motorist) of a frequently stopping bus with longer journey time, can be visually and actually mitigated by regular and effective bus priority.

Reducing journey times opens up wider job markets for people and improves air quality – halving average city centre traffic speeds leads to a 50% increase in harmful nitrogen oxide emissions.

Whilst moving to zero emission cars clearly has an impact on air quality and carbon emissions, it does nothing to reduce traffic and congestion. To truly tackle these issues – along with wider health and environmental issues - we need great increases in the provision and uptake of shared mobility as well as active travel.

Buses are the main travel mode in the region and have the capacity to support greater numbers of commuting passengers into Sheffield centre using low emission vehicles and services can be expanded if the demand is there in a normalised and stable operating environment. Increased bus use can also ease congestion, helping to improve bus journey times and reliability.

Pre-pandemic, bus commuters contributed £64bn to the economy and bus passengers were responsible for a third of all city centre expenditure (£21bn nationally). Buses and coaches are also an environmentally friendly form of transport - a new diesel bus is cleaner than a diesel car, and a fully loaded double decker bus can take 75 cars off the road. The city centre economy and viability of most City bus services are connected, providing commuting links to employers and easy access to retail and leisure.

Market forces and the concept of pricing to drive behaviours must also be appreciated and its logic applied. For example the current lack of modern vehicle age limits and emission standards on taxi/private hire vehicles has led to the offering of very low headline fares which compete with and undermine the public transport network of tram, rail and buses. It cannot be right that a single occupancy taxi is cheaper than using public transport. This just further compounds both congestion and air quality issues.

Supporting Buses and Coaches

The promotion of public transport provision, alongside other active travel measures, should be a principle objective of the Sheffield Plan linking into most, if not all of the stated aims in the plan.

Sheffield City Council and partners should be answerable for ambitious targets to deliver mode shift towards sustainable methods of transport, including buses and coaches, and transport-related standards and outcomes for new developments should be set, against which local planning authorities and developers are accountable.

The development of local authority plans and policies are a key requirement and driver to enable the improvements and changes we highlight. CPT would also highlight that true partnership approach between operators, SYPT and Sheffield City Council, with a focus on delivery and outcomes as mentioned above can reap benefits for all parties using a wider pool of data and expertise.

If the aims and vision of the Sheffield plan are to be met, difficult and unpopular decisions may be required especially on targeted measures against car use. Political engagement of elected members and MPs can be a key component to build alliances and informal partnerships, the number of people using public transport must be recognised and if necessary mobilised better to support priority measures.

As a broad example, the loss of a small number of on street parking bays to provide a new bus lane benefitting x thousands of passengers per day would surely be more preferable.

Development should be steered towards existing and potential public transport corridors and this is a point recognised in page 50 of the issues and options document. In addition for larger developments (especially housing), overall site design should ensure walking distances to the closest bus stop are within the DfT guidance of within 400m.

The favoured trend of estate design providing substantial car parking provision and a cul-de-sac nature in design should be discouraged, and actual walking distance to public transport should be a key design consideration.

The new definition of sustainable development should include provision for and promotion of active travel, including public transport and in particular buses and coaches.

A new “sustainable development test” must ensure that the Local Plan and subsequent major development proposals provide a sound basis to rapidly reduce carbon emissions from transport through the promotion of active travel, including public transport, and facilitate the economic, social, environmental and health benefits that this will bring about.

Section 106 contributions, where applicable needs to capture sufficient value to support greater investment in bus infrastructure, and a certain amount should be ‘ring fenced’ for this. Furthermore, anyone taking forward a development over a certain size should be required to partner with the local bus operator to demonstrate how it will deliver actual improvements to services.



There could be an offset mechanism for public transport infrastructure so that developers can offset affordable housing Levy liabilities where they are investing in specific public transport measures that truly mitigate development impacts, especially where these have broader positive off-site impacts in the corridor concerned such as improved frequencies, connectivity or better evening and Sunday provision.

The involvement of organisations such as SYPT, operators and CPT in early stages of pre planning design can reap huge benefits of working in partnership with partners who understand and operate local public transport.

Car parking costs within local authority remit should be considered. Car parks are typically too cheap and encourage people to drive into Sheffield City Centre.

Sheffield City Council could also consider other measures such as a work place car park levy (as adopted by Nottingham), a review into increased park and ride provision could offer solutions to reducing City Centre intended car use.

There are several high frequency cross city bus routes which can provide capacity for a park and ride site or sites without requiring significant vehicle investment. Park and Ride runs very successfully in many towns and cities including the ever expanding sites in Leeds and in the City of York.

Prioritising road space for buses and coaches to ensure a fast and consistent journey time is crucial to encourage people to make the switch.

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