

## **Leeds Equalities Assembly Transport Workshop Update**

In 2012, the Equalities Assembly, in partnership with the former West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (Metro), now the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), held a transport workshop to address the barriers that some people experience when travelling by bus.

The aim was to:

- bring together bus providers and customers;
- have an open and frank discussion about the issues which affect how some customers are able to access bus travel;
- look at how bus travel can be improved to make a customer's journey more comfortable.

It was intended that the workshop would be the starting point to building good, meaningful working relationships between transport providers and customers and would lead to further engagement in the future.

The city's major transport providers Arriva, First Bus, Transdev and Centre Bus were present and a Police Sergeant from Safer Travel West Yorkshire and officers from Metro also attended. The event was chaired by Councillor James Lewis, who was then chair of the Integrated Transport Authority and who is now chair of the WYCA's Transport Committee.

The main part of the workshop involved round-table discussions. The questions were based on the three transport issues most frequently raised in the survey and which participants considered to be the most challenging. These were training communication and value for money.

The following progress has been made:

### **You Said**

Training for transport staff is a priority. This includes customer service and disability awareness, peer led training and using true life experiences.

### **We Did**

#### Training for Authority and Metro Staff

- In 2012, Metro delivered Learning Disability awareness with bus station staff through the Safe Places scheme. Refresher training is being planned for 2014. The Safe Places scheme provides a network of safe places across Leeds, to which people with a learning disability can go if they are lost or are faced with dealing with any difficulties while they are out and about in the city.
- Hate crime awareness training was delivered to bus station and travel centre managers in March 2014, through Mind the Gap's Real Voices Real Lives programme. Mind the Gap is England's largest learning disability theatre company. Real Voices Real Lives is an interactive theatre

workshop delivered by professional, learning disabled actors who also have direct experience of the issues explored.

- West Yorkshire Combined Authority is currently working with West Yorkshire Police and others to look at how we develop and roll out the crime awareness training to the remainder of West Yorkshire Combined Authority staff. They are also looking at how this can be developed to share with bus operators.
- The Alzheimer's Society has delivered dementia awareness training to West Yorkshire Combined Authority staff and some AccessBus drivers.

#### Disability Awareness Training for Bus Drivers

- Metro organised a workshop in 2013, with bus driver training managers and trainers, Metro's training coordinator, and representatives from disability organisations, including RNIB, Mencap, United Response, Leeds City Council independent travel trainers, Bradford Mobility Planning Group, Inclusion North and Action for Blind People. The session focused on highlighting issues and identifying opportunities to improve disability awareness training for transport staff. A number of key areas were identified for further action, and work is on-going to look at how these can be progressed during 2014.

#### **You Said**

Communications are important, and should include information in accessible formats generally and at bus stops and on buses.

#### **We Did**

The following progress has been made:

#### Information in Accessible Formats

- Work is on-going to improve information for disabled travellers on Metro's web site, and this should be completed by summer 2014. The website address is [www.wymetro.com](http://www.wymetro.com)
- The following information in Easy Read and British Sign Language (BSL) will be available:
  - SmartCard user guide (BSL)
  - AccessBus (BSL)
  - Easy Access Buses (BSL)
  - Disabled Concessionary Bus Pass (Easy Read and BSL versions)
  - Customer Feedback form (Easy Read)

## Travel Assistance Cards

- Travel Assistance Cards have been designed to help disabled and older people communicate with bus drivers when using public transport. These cards can be particularly helpful for people with hidden disabilities such as hearing or visual impairments or learning disabilities as well as for people who are afraid of falling on the bus.

Designed as small cards, they fit in a bus ticket or concessionary pass wallet and can be shown to the driver. There are different messages such as “Please be patient, I have a visual impairment” and “Please wait for me to sit down”.

Travel Assistance Cards will be distributed to customers during spring 2014, and they will also be available for customers to print off from the Metro web site.

## **You Said**

Information sharing is important, including a clearer compliments and complaints procedure.

## **We Did**

### Compliments and Complaints

We have produced an EasyRead version of the customer feedback form and this is due to be launched on the Metro website during spring 2014.

## **You Said**

You would like to see better value for money, including clearer and consistent pricing structures, concessions for jobseekers and free travel before 9.30 for young people with disabled bus passes.

## **We Did**

### Clearer and consistent pricing structures

- The cost of Metro ticketing products is available on the Metro web site. The price of bus operator tickets is set by individual bus operators, and MetroCard prices are set by the TICCO (West Yorkshire Ticketing Company) Board, on which the West Yorkshire Combined Authority has one of nine places. The remaining eight Ticco Board seats are held by bus and train operators in accordance with market share. This complicated structure of the fares/ticketing system and the fact that bus operators only give West Yorkshire Combined Authority a minimum of two weeks’ notice of any fare change, makes it extremely difficult to publish pricing structures for bus operator tickets.

### Concessions for people trying to get back into work

- The MetroRover ticket provides half-fare travel for jobseekers on almost all bus and train services in West Yorkshire. This 28-day ticket costs £5.
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Travel Plan Network, with external funding, has worked with JobCentre Plus for a number of years to provide jobseekers with free travel to access job interviews and a free monthly travel pass when starting a new job. In March 2013, an additional 'Travel to Train' pilot project was launched to support young people who were applying for or starting apprenticeship schemes but were struggling with travel costs. The pilot provides day tickets for interviews and training and Monthly Student Plus tickets to young people in financial hardship and who are starting apprenticeships. Jobseekers can access passes through their JobCentre Plus adviser and passes for apprentices are being issued by Apprenticeships providers.
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority has recently worked with the Youth Association's Young Inspectors Programme to consult young people who are not in education employment or training (NEET) on how West Yorkshire Combined Authority could support them with travel costs. This work will be further developed during 2014.
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority has recently opened discussions with bus operators to extend the halffare concession to all under 18s (currently available to under 16s and 16-18 year olds in full time education).
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority is introducing a new 16-25 travel card this spring, providing discounted bus and rail travel throughout West Yorkshire for all 16-25 year olds.

### Free travel before 9.30am for people with disabled passes

- West Yorkshire Combined Authority is aware of the difficulties that some disabled permit holders have with the cost of travel for pre-9.30am journeys, and that this is a particular problem for young people and people with learning disabilities travelling to college, volunteering and work placement opportunities.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority currently spends £42m per year on reimbursing bus operators for concessionary fares for older and disabled people. Extending this concession to provide free travel before 9.30am would result in a significant increase to West Yorkshire Combined Authority's concessionary fares expenditure, and current budget constraints mean this is not possible.

In 2010, Metro developed a business case in consultation with disabled permit holders, which proposed the introduction of a concessionary £5 MetroCard. This MetroCard would have allowed disabled permit holders to travel before 9.30am. The business case was not supported by bus operators and as a result Metro was unable to progress the proposal.