**Election of a Mayor for the**
**York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority**

**2nd May 2024**

# A Manifesto for transforming travel in York and North Yorkshire

## 1 The context

1.1 It is widely recognised that the public transport network in York and North Yorkshire is currently not fit for purpose and does not serve residents, visitors or the economy well. Many routes have been withdrawn or curtailed and frequencies have become inconvenient. This:

* damages the economy by restricting access to education, jobs, shops and leisure;
* encourages recourse to cars and hence generates congestion and pollution; and
* constricts the lives of those who cannot afford or cannot drive a car.

1.2 This Manifesto and the accompanying illustrative plan have been prepared by a group of representatives of concerned community organisations and drafted by a transport consultant specialising in timetable planning.

1.3 We are seeking the interest and support of the Mayoral candidates. The elected Mayor and the new York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority

* will be responsible for combining the Local Transport Plans of the constituent Councils;
* will be endowed with substantial resources; and
* will have powers to prepare a scheme for extensive reform of public transport.

It is vital that they take urgent steps to maximise the opportunity to transform travel in the area.

## 2 Transformation is essential

2.1 Incomplete bus and train networks, ill-timed connections, slow and unreliable journeys, particularly due to heavy congestion and a lack of bus priorities, infrequent services and timetables without evening and weekend journeys do not afford people with a car available sufficient convenience for them to use the services offered. Those without a car must attempt to shape their lives around whatever services exist, and in many places that is increasingly difficult. This bleak picture is exacerbated by mediocre presentation of information, high fares and the poor accessibility and unwelcoming physical environment of bus stops.

2.2 Widespread dissatisfaction with public transport has been expressed by people in recent consultation exercises,, including the Let's Talk Transport survey. This must change, for these interlocking reasons:

* burning fossil fuel raises temperatures – with incalculable risks to life on Earth;
* emission of pollutants from internal combustion engines and from brake and tyre wear (including from electric vehicles) damages human health;

* roads and traffic contribute to the loss of life-supporting natural resources;

* excessive traffic on our roads makes life unpleasant and dangerous for everyone, especially pedestrians and cyclists;

* congestion is an inefficient means of rationing scarce road space, especially when it delays buses; and

* denying some citizens access to opportunities and facilities should be unacceptable in a civilised society.

2.3 Central to future transport policy must therefore be measures to so improve public transport that a significant proportion of journeys are transferred from cars to buses and trains, both of which are more energy efficient and less polluting (provided that they are well used). York and North Yorkshire's Routemap to Carbon Negative requires a substantial and rapid switch from private cars to active travel and public transport. Such a policy may not be sufficient to fully address the problems outlined above, but it is a necessary part of the solution.

## 3 Communal transport transformed

3.1 We envisage development of a comprehensive network of services with these characteristics:

* integrated bus and train operations planned as a whole network and presented consistently under a single brand and matched across boundaries with neighbouring areas;

* frequent services on principal urban and inter-urban routes from early morning until late evening, every day of the week, including bank holidays;

* supplementary services for every neighbourhood and village closely coordinated with the principal routes;

* every timing planned to repeat every hour so that timetables are easily memorable;

* connectivity carefully optimised between trains and buses and between buses at every interchange and managed effectively in real time;

* excellent trains and electric buses;

* high-quality infrastructure at bus stops and bus and rail stations, providing a safe and attractive environment to wait, and easy access onto buses and trains for everyone, including those with disabilities;

* sustained high standards of reliability and punctuality facilitated by widespread bus priority measures in urban areas;

* a simple system of good-value fares and concessions, including period tickets to encourage loyalty and regular use; and

* delivery by franchisees working to strong performance contracts.

Aspects of this vision are being discussed by many authorities and campaigns around Britain, but we believe that this is the first attempt to illustrate it with real timings in a structured network.

3.2 The last clause reflects our view that the Mayor's power to establish a Franchise scheme is the only mechanism capable of achieving the necessary coherence, but we recognise that willing participation in an Enhanced Partnership may help initially. Franchising will require the appointment of experienced planning staff.

3.3 Such a network would, over time, create awareness of the *convenience* of communal transport for the majority of journeys, whether in towns or around the area or for visitors. It would both replace trips by car and be socially equitable by ensuring that every citizen has equal access to the necessities and amenities of life.

3.4 Compared with the prevailing regime our vision may appear impractical, but this ignores the fact that many other countries have adopted a quite different approach. They believe in the advantages of planned, comprehensive and coordinated systems and in the democratic importance of equal access.

3.5 Switzerland is not the only exemplar, but it offers the most thoroughgoing framework. National and Cantonal legislation lays down minimum standards of provision for all but the smallest settlement. Timetables linked in a clear hierarchy make it possible to travel conveniently by train and/or bus between any pair of places at any reasonable time. Over the years this has plainly led to public transport being both a core function in daily life and a component of the social contract.

3.6 To achieve the transformation we propose will require a significant investment. However this will be offset if eyes are lifted from simplistic accounting to a wider perspective. To set against the costs, and bearing in mind the possibility of a staged introduction, these benefits and cost savings must enter the equation:

* removal of the profit presently made by private companies in excess of the legitimate fees that will be included in franchise agreements;

* a gradual reduction in the prodigious cost of congestion, for example in unproductive time, inefficient fuel consumption and damage from chemicals and particulates in the environment;

* savings in the health budget as life-diminishing illness attributable to pollution is reduced and fewer road accidents occur;

* an economic boost as easier travel improves access to education, work, shops and leisure;

* a potential increase in local bus manufacturing (Alexander-Dennis in Scarborough, Switch in Sherburn-in-Elmet) to meet the need for additional vehicles;

* improved physical and mental health for those whose lives are presently constrained by the unavailability of public transport, especially the known burdens of loneliness (this makes use of buses for leisure journeys very important); and

* the intangible but not insignificant advantages where a community consciously manages and uses a shared public utility.

3.7 Development of the network would be expected to replace the current vicious circle of declining patronage and retrenchment with a virtuous circle whereby rising usage spreads the cost of enhancing services.

## 4 Who has written this proposal and draft plan and what should happen next ?

4.1 The group that commissioned this project includes individuals who have been campaigning for good public transport for many years, retired planners from local government, an academic transport economist and officers from a community-interest company running bus services in North Yorkshire. The group invited Jonathan Tyler to design the core strategy. After a management and research career in British Rail, and seven years as British Rail Lecturer at the University of Birmingham, he has been working since 1983 as an independent consultant advocating the potential benefits of adopting Swiss practice in Britain. He lives and works in York.

4.2 Jonathan has held a licence to use Swiss timetable-planning software since 2000 and has deployed it to support proposed railway enhancement projects. The cost of his time developing this project is being covered by a grant from the Foundation for Integrated Transport [FIT]. This registered charity sponsors a wide range of similar projects in keeping with its founding belief in a world where

> *"Humans have a right to get around without a car. People can travel with minimum impact on other people's lives and the environment. And trains and buses are integrated and safe and attractive routes are provided for walking and cycling."*

Jonathan is a Fellow of the Foundation and has previously held a grant to design an integrated timetable for inter-city trains in Scotland.

4.3 The inspiration for this plan is not only the Swiss model (which is applied in other countries in Europe too, including in Länder in Germany), but also a report published by the countryside charity CPRE in 2021 entitled *Every village, every hour*. Written by the consultancy Transport for Quality of Life this demonstrated how a transformed policy for buses would have substantial economic and social benefits and would not increase (and might reduce) the real costs of securing good public services. If the new Mayor is minded to explore our proposition it is suggested that the modelling tools incorporated in the CPRE report should be applied to York and North Yorkshire.

4.4 This Manifesto is accompanied by a technical commentary describing construction of the draft plan, some examples of route timetables and a *netgraph* that displays the essence of train and bus services in an integrated network of regular-interval timetables.

4.5 Transport and climate change will be the biggest issues for the new Mayor to address. We hope that these proposals provide inspiration for the urgent transformation of transport in York and North Yorkshire, and will form a basis for action by the Mayor. The commissioning group would welcome the opportunity to discuss them with the candidates, transport authorities and other interested parties.

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