

North Yorkshire County Council
Richmond Constituency Committee – 23 November 2022

Update on the YorBus Pilot Project

1.0 Purpose of the Report

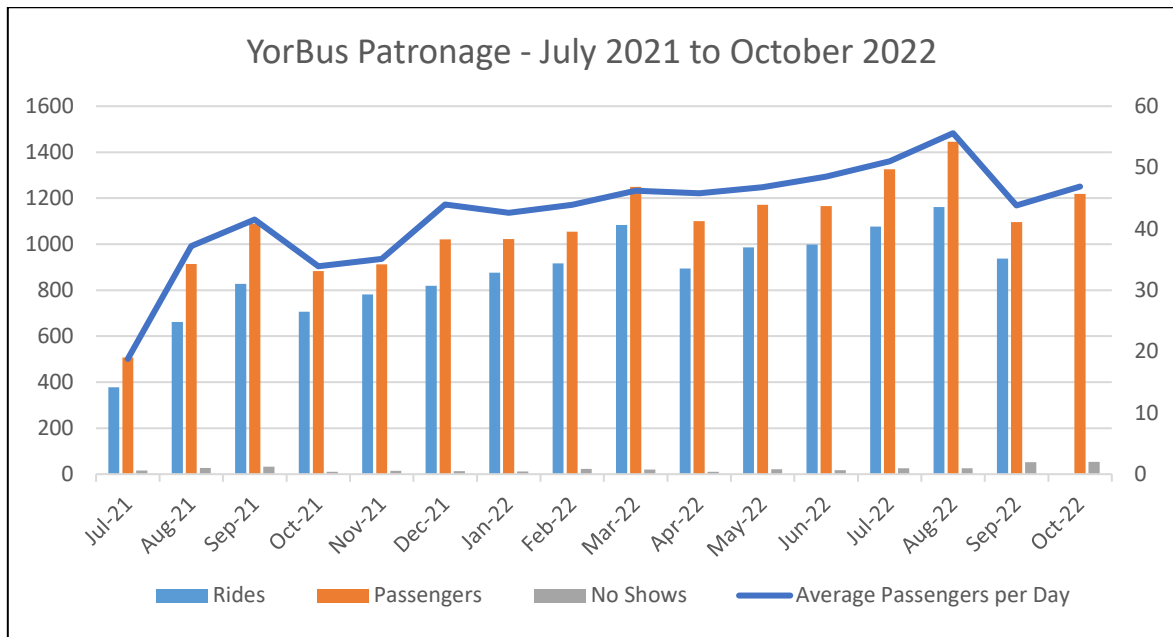
- 1.1 To update the committee on the operation of the YorBus pilot Digital Demand Responsive Bus Service.

2.0 Background

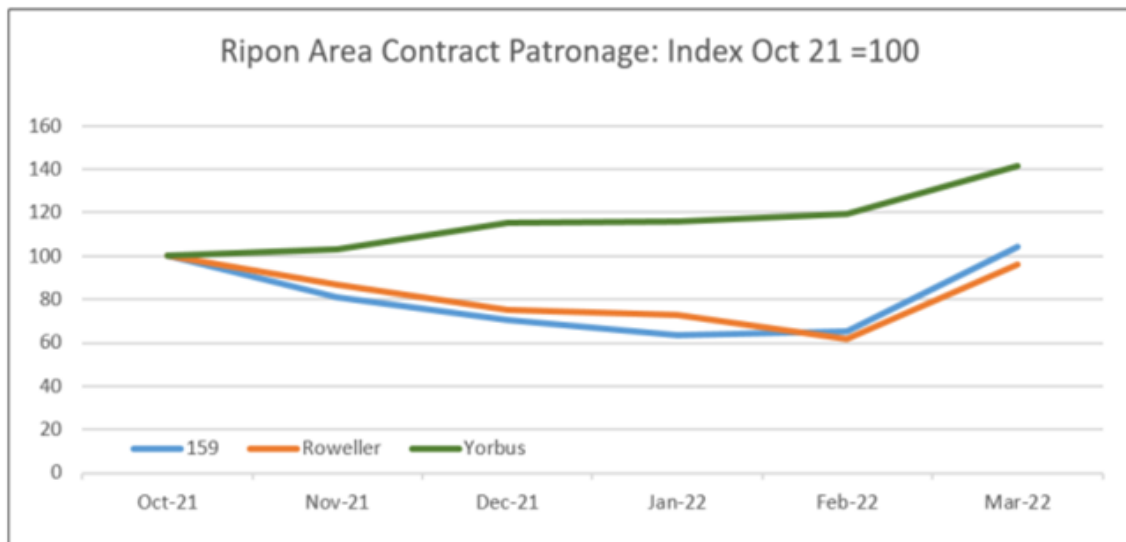
- 2.1 YorBus is a flexible, on-demand bus service connecting Ripon, Masham, Bedale and surrounding villages. It is a flexible transport service, where transport is shared and vehicles use software to vary their routes within a defined operating area based on customer demand rather than using a fixed route or timetable.
- 2.2 The service started in July 2021, initially as a 12 month pilot project, and has subsequently been extended for a second year up to 30 June 2023.
- 2.3 The service is run with two 14 seater, wheelchair accessible buses using NYCC “in house” fleet vehicles and staff resource; operating from 06:55 to 18:00 Monday to Friday, and 09:00 to 18:00 on Saturdays and covering a largely rural area of 217km². A map of the operating area is included below (Annex A).
- 2.4 Customers book journeys on the bus via the dedicated YorBus app or through the NYCC Customer Service Centre. The option to pre-book journeys in advance was added from 1 August 2022 allowing journeys to be booked up to a day in advance and this is already proving popular.
- 2.5 Fares were increased from the start of August with a single journey costing £2:00 for adults, £1:00 for a child, with under-fives travelling for free. Customers with a concessionary bus pass may use their bus pass to travel for free within concessionary bus pass hours.
- 2.6 Further details are available on the NYCC website at [YorBus - Connecting North Yorkshire | North Yorkshire County Council](#)

3.0 Performance of YorBus 2021/22

- 3.1 Patronage of the YorBus service has been stronger than forecast during the first year of the pilot.



3.2 Initial findings when comparing YorBus passenger data with that of the subsidised services indicates that YorBus is attracting a different type of bus user. This is likely a combination of the flexibility of the service, coupled with the ease of booking via an app, which would appeal to younger adults (who typically use buses less than concessionary pass holders). Most subsidised bus services find that a high proportion of their passengers are concessionary bus pass users; YorBus breaks this trend, with more than 90% of users being fare paying adults or children. This shows that the flexibility of the YorBus service is meeting a different need to other local bus routes – further evidenced by the growth of the YorBus service over winter, a period when bus services normally see a drop in patronage.



3.3 The business case for the project identified a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the service. The table below sets out these KPIs and the progress the pilot has made in achieving them:

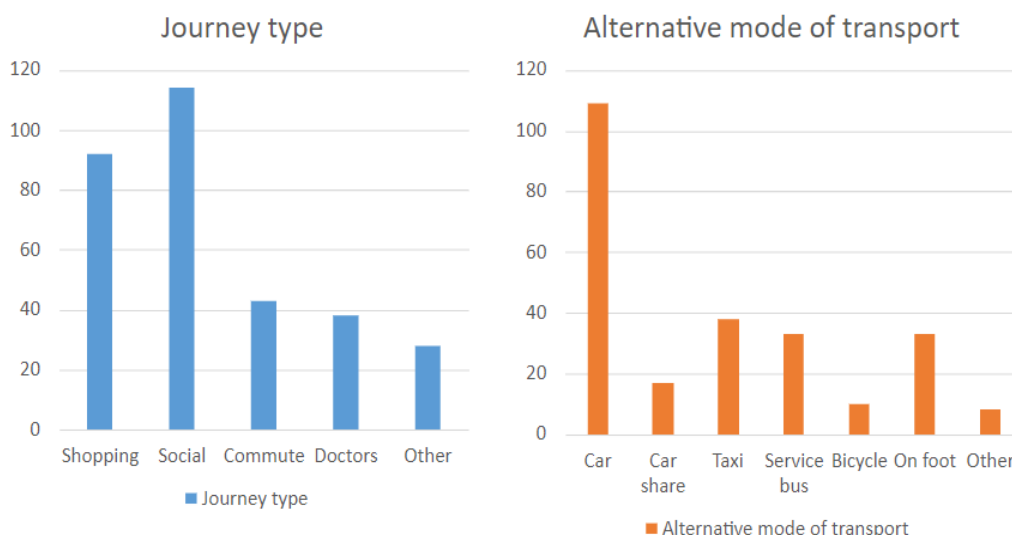
KPI	Measure	Target	Progress (31/10/22)
Passenger mode shift from fixed timetable to YorBus	Number of pick ups	758 at 3 months 885 at 6 months	17,195 Patronage data on LBS suggests this is latent

			demand rather than modal shift
Customer satisfaction	Ride rating	85% of riders give a 4 or 5 star rating	90.2% 5 star rating
Awareness of service	Citizens Panel survey responses which indicate they have heard of the YorBus service	50% respondents indicate they are aware of the service (6 months post Go Live)	84% of respondents who live in Hambleton or Harrogate districts (where the pilot operates) are aware of the service
Customer base	Number of customer accounts created	171 at 3 months 398 at 6 months	3,246 accounts created
Journey availability	% requests which receive a ride proposal	80% requests receive a proposal	76.7% requests received a proposal. Up to 31 July this was 81.8%, the introduction of pre booking has affected this.
Pick up times	% ride proposals within 45 minutes of search time	65% requests offered a journey within 45 minutes of search time	Average wait time 32.5 minutes (71% of all scheduled rides* offered a journey within 45 minutes of search) *Figure not obtainable where ride proposal was not confirmed or for pre-booked rides
Punctuality	Average pick up time: Scheduled v Actual	Average pick up time: Scheduled v Actual to be less than 5 minutes	Average pick up time: Scheduled v Actual 0.4 minutes
Service suitability	% accepted proposals	60% proposals accepted at 6 months	44.5% - although lower than target, this is higher than other DR services when looked at in a bench marking exercise

4.0 Customer Feedback

- 4.1 Feedback from customers has been very positive, and the high levels of customer satisfaction are reflected in the number of repeat passengers using the service.
- 4.2 In the period 01/07/21 - 31/07/22, YorBus has seen more than 850 active riders complete over 13,000 passenger journeys, with 39.4% of these customers completing more than 5 journeys on the service. There are a number of customers who have completed more than 100 rides on the service.
- 4.3 Customers who leave feedback via the app leave an average rating of 4.9 out of 5 stars, with 90.5% of rides being given a 5 star rating.
- 4.4 A survey carried out in May 2022 found that customers have been using the YorBus service to travel to work, to access essential services and for social trips, and that the most common mode of transport which would have been used if YorBus wasn't available was a car. This shows that YorBus is helping to encourage North Yorkshire residents away from the private motor vehicle and onto public transport.

- What do/would you use the service for? How would you travel otherwise?



5.0 Finance

5.1 The net cost of running the service for 2022/23 (April 22 – March 23) of £229k is included in the budget of North Yorkshire County Council.

6.0 Next Steps

6.1 Further development is taking place during the remaining pilot period:

- Assessing the impact of introducing the pre-booking option and fare increase.
- Offering new fares initiatives such as a group travel discount and a ‘refer a friend’ scheme.
- Promotion of the ‘virtual bus stops’ feature.
- Comparison of service performance with other tendered fixed route bus services.
- Considering options to roll YorBus out to other parts of the county as part of a review of Local Bus Service provision. Following the confirmation from the DfT that Bus Service Improvement Plan funding will not be forthcoming this will involve seeking alternative funding sources to support any wider rollout

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 The Committee is asked to note the information in this report.

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14 November 2022

Annex A - Map showing area covered by YorBus pilot scheme

Annex A

