

**North Yorkshire County Council
Richmond (Yorks) Constituency Committee – 9 June 2021
Digital Demand Responsive Bus Service**

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the committee on plans to introduce a Digital Demand Responsive Service within the county from 1 July 2021 for a trial period of up to 12 months.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The majority of bus services operating in the county are provided by a commercial network of bus services. Currently around 90% of bus passenger journeys are made on such services and the remaining services are financially supported. These services are delivered in a traditional way through fixed routes and set timetables. Other councils in different areas of the UK have investigated, trialed and successfully implemented different passenger transport models. Demand Responsive Transport services have been successfully introduced by other local authorities (such as Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Tees Valley).
- 2.2 A demand responsive service is a flexible transport service, where transport is shared and vehicles vary their routes based on demand rather than using a fixed route or timetable, therefore providing transport that would react to local needs.

3.0 Digital Demand Responsive Service

- 3.1 A digital demand response service is to be introduced within the county from 1 July 2021 for a trial period of up to 12 months. A map of the trial area can be found at annex 1.
- 3.2 The service will be supported digitally. This means software for devices will be available on the customer and driver side:
- Passengers will be able to book and pay for a journey using an 'app' (a software application). However a telephone booking channel and payment on bus will be available. Digital booking and payment does contribute to the longer term sustainability of such services.
 - The drivers receive their routes based on advance or real-time bookings. The most efficient route in each case is calculated depending on the passengers' pick-up and destination points and are communicated to the driver on a device similar to a 'sat-nav'.
- 3.3 The software will prevent bookings for journeys being made where these can be made on existing commercial services. This is to ensure the financial stability of these services are not put at risk. There are five subsidised services in the trial area and the software will prevent bookings on one of these (service number 159) that is partially routed in the trial area. However, the software will allow bookings to be made on four subsidised services (136, 138, 138A, 139 and 144) that are wholly in the zone. A map of these supported services can be found at annex 2

- 3.4 As detailed above, the service will operate on demand and have flexible routing, but as it will be a public transport the vehicle will be shared by customers. This is unlike taxis which are a more private form of transport and not usually shared, where as traditional bus services are public transport and the vehicles shared by customers. In practice this means:
- The software may divert the vehicle from direct journeys to pick up or drop off different passengers (unlike a taxi).
 - Passengers may need to wait to be picked up (where as taxi is usually 'instant' pick up).
 - The service will operate from bus stop to bus stop (unlike a taxi).
- 3.5 There will be limitations in the software on the maximum diversion and wait time. It may also be possible that not all journey requests can be met 100% of the time. However the fares charged will be similar to local bus fares. There will be a flat fare of £1.20 (£0.65 child) and ENCTS passes accepted.
- 3.6 The provision of the bus service will be by the Integrated Passenger Transport internal fleet and the Customer Service Centre will manage the telephone channel. A third party supplier will be used to deliver a digital booking and software for devices on the passenger and driver side.
- 3.7 A comprehensive marketing campaign will target customers in the pilot area to raise awareness of the service and how to access it. In addition, 'How To' videos and FAQs will be developed for members of the public using the app. A series of 'roadshows' will be undertaken with staff spending time at key locations in the trial area to promote the service and explain to potential passengers how to make bookings.
- 3.8 Forthcoming key dates are:
- 22-25 June 2021: Roadshows
 - 1 July 2021: Service starts
- 3.9 Once the service has started Members (within the trial area) will receive regular updates by email highlighting some or all of the following:
- Patronage/usage levels
 - Popular locations
 - Any challenges and how they are being addressed
 - Indicative customer feedback (rate my ride star rating)
 - Details of any ongoing promotions
- 3.10 Consideration has been given to the potential for any adverse equality impacts arising from the project and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. No adverse impacts have currently been identified and the Equalities Impact Assessment will continue to be reviewed and refreshed throughout the project.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note and discuss the information in this report.

Author:
Cathy Knight
Integrated Passenger Transport
Business and Environmental Services
North Yorkshire County Council
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