



**NORTH  
LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE  
POLICY COMMITTEE REFERRAL  
RESPONSE**



**Public question from Maureen Barnett, raised at the North Local Area Committee on 7 July 2022**

**Question:**

Unfortunately I cannot make the meeting as I do not drive but please could a suggestion be put on my behalf. I live at Grenoside where the bus service is deteriorating at a rapid rate to the point where many older people are not going out and becoming semi-housebound. The 135 is so infrequent and unreliable so people avoid it. The 86 is more reliable and regular but has a long tortuous route and does not connect with the tram or other bus services. The M92 is reliable and goes directly to the interchange, making connections possible. However, there are only 4 a day with timing gaps of 2hrs 10 minutes and only in the middle of the day. Yet in spite of its lack of frequency it is the busiest bus. What is needed is a shuttle service directly to Hillsborough Interchange, possibly hourly. A smaller bus like the M92 would be adequate. I feel very strongly that should be seriously considered. Thank you.

**Resolution at the North LAC meeting:**

That the issue around funding for bus services in the north of Sheffield, as mentioned above, be referred to the South Yorkshire Mayor and the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee

**Outcome of referral to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee:**

The initial referral was made to Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee, however the responsibility for public transport sits with South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), therefore the issue around funding for bus services in the north of Sheffield, as mentioned above, has been referred to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority for a response.

**Response from the Director of Public Transport Operations, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority:**

I share those concerns at a time when operators are failing to provide passengers with the services they need and deserve.

Under South Yorkshire's current system, bus companies are free to decide where and when they will run services.

Bus operators continue to face a number of challenges, including the financial impact of the pandemic, increase in fuel prices, and a chronic shortage of drivers. The latter has resulted in frequent on-the-day, short notice cancellations on a number of their operations, including service 135. Operators are doing everything they can to minimise the disruption to customers, including training new drivers, although this takes time for new recruits to become qualified drivers.

The chronic shortage of drivers and rising operating costs have resulted in operators making the difficult decision to withdraw or curtail a number of their routes. Although we all know how vital these routes are to local communities, our current bus system allows operators to make these decisions on the basis of commercial viability alone.

Whilst the Government's extension to its Bus Recovery Grant funding for a further six months (announced on 19 August) from October 2022 until March 2023 has enabled bus companies to protect some services, some operators took the decision to continue with planned changes.

When bus companies withdraw services, as they have done over the past year, and more recently from 2 October, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) can pay other companies to run the routes at risk.

The Mayor and four local authority leaders, as the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) Board, therefore took the decision to try and plug these gaps by putting the routes out to tender, i.e. paying bus operators to run them – funded from MCA reserves. Although this is not a long-term solution, they believe it is the best way to protect communities from the immediate impact, given that so many people's livelihoods and wellbeing depend on these services.

Regrettably, the budget we have to support buses is limited and will not stretch to fill all the gaps and for a number of the routes we put out to tender we have received no bids, i.e. we cannot even pay bus companies to provide these services and we continue to see the shortage of bus drivers as a major concern in limiting the number of services possible.

In this instance Stagecoach have curtailed service 135, which since 2 October only operates between Rotherham and Chapeltown. Stagecoach continue to operate service 86 and South Pennine still run service M92, which offer alternative journeys. Regrettably, we are not in a position to introduce a shuttle bus to Hillsborough Interchange and even if we had the funding, would struggle finding an operator to resource this as they continue to face a shortage of drivers and rising operating costs.

The full list of service changes can be found at:

<https://www.travelsouthyorkshire.com/en-GB/LandingPage/service-changes>

We are currently advising customers to make alternative travel arrangements using our journey planner tool at <https://journeyplanner.travelsouthyorkshire.com/> or by ringing Traveline on 01709 51 51 51. Anyone who may struggle to access the mainstream public transport network can register to use Community Bus services. Although there is a cost involved, as it is subsidised, it is a cheaper alternative to a taxi and can be booked up to one week in advance. Generally, Dial a Ride and Shopper Bus services operate Monday

to Friday between 9am and 5pm. People can register by calling their local operator. Details are available at [www.travelsouthyorkshire.com/accessibility-door2door](http://www.travelsouthyorkshire.com/accessibility-door2door)

We will, of course, continue to explore any and all opportunities to protect and improve services, to give our community the bus network South Yorkshire needs and deserves – including our assessment of the benefits that franchising could bring to our bus network.

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