

25-YEAR TRANSPORT VISION

Over the last 12 months, progress has been made on the key elements of the £4.5bn Leeds City Region 25-year Transport Vision, which was unveiled in November 2006.

Having gained the Regional Transport Board's approval for a New Generation Transport system for Leeds and its commitment of £150m for its first phase, city transport specialists are now developing detailed proposals for approval by the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority and the City Council.

This final, detailed business case, which the Leeds City Region has been working on with Department for Transport officials, will be for a system that provides the optimum benefits for its costs. Work to date is indicating that the first phase of the system is likely to run from a major park-and-ride site in Stourton to the south of the city, into and around the city centre and on to St James's Hospital. To maximise efficiency, punctuality and reliability, it would be segregated as much as possible from other traffic.

The route is most likely to be served by the latest generation of high-quality buses that could be powered by overhead wires, but would have the potential for conversion to tram in the long term.

Public consultation is planned in autumn 2008 and the full business case is scheduled for submission to the Department for Transport in spring 2009.

In March 2008, Network Rail announced it would be holding UK trials of tram-trains on the Penistone Line, which runs between Huddersfield and Sheffield via Penistone.

Metro sees tram-trains, which are used successfully in Germany, as a way of increasing capacity on the busy Leeds-Harrogate-York line. The reduced costs of running them would provide new opportunities to run lines into town and city centres, extend routes into areas of growing employment and create a much-needed link to Leeds Bradford International Airport.

Discussions over plans to extend the benefits of MetroCard are underway and a first stage for this might be to offer MetroCard benefits on rail travel from outside West Yorkshire and bus use within West Yorkshire. The possibility of a wider scheme which encompasses bus travel outside West Yorkshire received a significant boost when the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Transport Board (RTB) approved £28m to roll out the Yorcard smartcard across the whole of the Yorkshire and Humber region.

A new southern entrance to Leeds City Station and a new Parkway station to the east of Leeds also received backing from the RTB as part of an £80m package of Leeds city region transport approved measures.

