

West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) submission to the Commission on Travel Demand – understanding changing travel demand

Introduction

WYCA is keen to submit to this enquiry and to work closely with ITS in actively contributing, along with our partner districts. The submission below is hopefully a useful start, but we are keen to follow up in more detail in due course so it would be useful to see this as the start of a dialogue.

1. Which aspects of travel demand have changed in ways which have not been anticipated by traditional forecasting approaches in the past twenty years?

A number of demand forecasting studies have been undertaken locally for a range of different purposes over the years, while clearly we are aware of national forecasts from sources such as NTEM/ TEMPRO. We have in house economic and transport forecasting models, while each of the districts also have their own transport models. We also work with the likes of Edge Analytics to forecast future demographic trends. We are happy to fully share any of these with the enquiry as is useful.

There is also a range of local monitoring across modes undertaken by ourselves, our district partners and others including traffic monitors, publicly available info on station footfall trends, we can also get passenger counts (usually for automated counters on trains) via Rail North, and sometimes we get access to other industry tools for use in specific studies. We also have various surveys and similar carried out for various purposes from time to time.

While each of the demand forecasts are undertaken for different purposes and at different times, they clearly use different methods and assumptions to produce their figures so there is inevitably little consistency, and results do not necessarily reconcile. A current piece of work to be aware of is a demand and capacity study being undertaken for LCR (and DfT/ Rail North) by GHD consultants.

A number of our teams and stakeholders feel that the findings from the multitude of forecasting that takes place end up being “wrong” and this is an area that we can follow up in more detail with you. For example, it is felt that studies both here and across the country consistently under forecast growth in regional rail, in common with the major city regions of the North.

It's felt that a number of different studies have been done around the country into this, but they've not managed satisfactorily to 'close the demand gap', i.e. fully explain and predict the growth that we keep on seeing. From an LCR point of view, the current GHD study mentioned above is of most interest – although notably at present that too is coming up with relatively low demand forecasts.

This is an area that we are keen to work with the enquiry in more detail on.

2. How do these changes relate to the way in which the activities that we participate in have changed? What other factors might explain change?

A number of factors – national and local – are clearly affecting changing travel demands. Local trends to highlight include:

- Significant population growth forecast of up to 15% by 2028
- A trend of increasingly dispersed commuting trips with longer distances being travelled. Travel to work distance has increased over time as a result of more people working outside their district of residence. Between 2001 and 2011, average travel distances rose by 14.4% for West Yorkshire residents (from 11.3 to 12.9 kilometres). Leeds is increasingly being travelled into from other parts of the region – and forecast for this to happen further.
- Falling bus usage with uncompetitive journey times and major challenges with serving dispersed trip patterns
- Rail patronage in West Yorkshire has increased significantly over the last ten years, rising from 17.8m passenger journeys to 34.9m passenger journeys between 2004/05 and 2014/15 (a 96% increase).
- Distribution of new employment is predominantly in Leeds City Centre and east of the city, though uncertainty over final geographic spread
- Although City Centre jobs are increasing, car commuting is falling with City Centre living a key component
 - City centre jobs up 4%
 - Car commuting down 9%
 - Public transport marginally up – including rail
 - Cycling up 108%
 - Walking up 125%
- Half of new commuting to City centre forecast from outside ORR
- Traffic levels and journey times are forecast to increase

3. How do these vary spatially? Are there distinctions between central, suburban and rural areas and are there differences between cities?

There is no distinct spatial differences, other than the increasing role of Leeds in comparison to other local cities and towns. This is an area which we could explore more going forward

4. How do they vary over time? Are there particular times in the week where demand has changed or seasonal variations which have emerged?

Again, this is an area which we could potentially explore in more detail with the enquiry

5. What methods can be used to incorporate greater uncertainty in demand? Have they been deployed and to what effect?

We are very aware of uncertainty in all of our economic, demographic and transport demand forecasting, and particularly that this uncertainty is likely to be greater in future. As well as reconciling and sensitivity testing our various forecasts, we are beginning to consider how to account for future uncertainty and would be interested to explore this with the Commission.