

The background of the slide is a photograph of a red double-decker bus in motion, blurred to show speed. In the background, the illuminated tower of a church, likely St. Peter's Church in Leeds, is visible against a dark sky. The bus is moving from the bottom left towards the top right.

Imagine an Excellent Bus Service for Leeds

Competition Results

October 2021



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INTRODUCTION



Competition of ideas

In May 2021 Leeds Civic Trust launched a unique community engagement project asking residents to 'Imagine an Excellent Bus Service for Leeds'. People could get involved in the project and share their ideas in several ways, from completing an online survey, adding a comment to the interactive map, taking part in a focus group or by submitting an idea to our Competition of Ideas – all of which could be done on www.ExcellentBusesLeeds.org.uk.

The competition was open to anyone and everyone who had an idea of how to improve the bus services. The reasons why our bus service needs improving are well known; buses are often late and infrequent, fares are expensive and complicated to understand, and making a journey around Leeds without going into the city centre is a near impossible task. But the challenge with this competition was to come up with innovative ideas: big or small, radical or tactical, neighbourhood specific or city-wide that would improve our bus service.

By a 'bus service' we meant things such as the vehicles used and the roads they run on, their accessibility and connectivity (where they go and how often), and how they are managed (who owns the buses and who decides what sort of service should be provided).

We welcomed competition entries from everyone and anyone, whether they're an avid bus user or not. We also welcomed entries in any format or structure, allowing people the freedom to submit their most imaginative ideas.

Although the best ideas were awarded cash prizes and Leeds Civic Trust membership, each submission played a vital part in the overarching 'Imagine' project, as each suggestion and idea also contributed to the project's final report findings.



Leeds Civic Trust

The Leeds Civic Trust is a civil society amenity group which has for over 50 years campaigned for the city of Leeds through encouraging development that is a source of pride, conserving and enhancing its heritage and promoting the improvement of its public amenities.

Key issues we hear about the bus services are that they are expensive, unreliable and are too focussed on city centre routes. With this project and competition, we wanted to start a wider conversation about our bus services to understand at a deeper level what improvements the people of Leeds wanted to see, and how we could achieve them.

“The competition shows that people care about their bus service and are full of ideas as to how it could be improved. The next step is real change on the ground.”

- Martin Hamilton, Trust Director





The judges

The competition was open throughout the summer of 2021 and in total we received 60 entries which ranged from simple text submissions, drawings, leaflets, maps to detailed reports outlining long term goals.

To decide how to award the cash prizes amongst the 12 finalists, we were excited to be joined by three guest judges:



Thomas Ableman

Founder of Snap Travel Technology (www.getasnap.com) and the Freewheeling blog and podcast (www.freewheeling.info), Thomas started his career as a Graduate Trainee for National Express and did a range of strategic roles in the NX coach division. Thomas now works as Innovation Director at Transport for London.



Gem Turner

An award-winning disabled content creator based in West Yorkshire, Gem consults with organisations on improving their inclusive practices to make services and processes as accessible as possible.



Dr Niels van Oort

Co-director of the Smart Public Transport Lab at Delft University of Technology. Niels' main fields of expertise are passenger behaviour, service reliability and emerging modes, having been involved in public transport projects and research for over 15 years.



What makes an excellent bus service?

Throughout the 60 competition entries, several common themes emerged which are vital in creating an excellent bus service, including **reliability**, **frequency**, clearer **communication** with passengers, cheaper and lower **fares**, **accessible infrastructure**, and many, many more. According to our guest judges:

“An excellent bus service is one that is everyone’s unquestioned first choice of transport” – Thomas Ableman

“I believe an excellent bus service is one that allows for anyone to feel a part of a community, it’s not just about getting from A-B but the way in which that is done. As a wheelchair user, I’ve experienced many different scenarios when travelling, some outstanding and some I never want again! Being able to be spontaneous, comfortable and a part of a community shouldn’t be the luxury it feels a lot of the time which is why I’m so excited to be a small part of this great project.” - Gem Turner

“An excellent bus service for me implies a comfortable, reliable and fast journey, including the trip from and to the stop (walking or cycling)” – Dr Niels van Oort

The following section outlines the twelve submissions which were shortlisted to the final round of judging.

FINALISTS

1. The Bus Hygiene Model – Elliot Jarvis



Highly
Commended

A simplified guide which outlines best practice for bus operators, the judges were impressed by the quality of this entry, particularly it's aesthetically pleasing presentation, the entry was commended for being well presented and well articulated.

2. Essay: Mobility as a Service – Stanley Wilson

Highly
Commended

A detailed essay outlining the history and implications of bus franchising, along with highlighting solutions which would increase bus patronage, the judges commended this entry for being well researched and thorough.

On the future of bus travel in Leeds, Mobility as a Service

Local bus service use in Britain peaked in the early 1950s and has declined since, mainly due to the growth in car ownership over this time. Deregulation of the bus network in 1986 failed to reverse the decline and has arguably made things worse; instead of a focus on the common need for a city wide network, there has been a focus on commercial profits. Outside of London we essentially find ourselves with unregulated private monopolies having taken charge of critical urban infrastructure.

Buses in Greater London were not deregulated and instead a franchise system was introduced. This has arguably allowed greater genuine competition between franchisees in London, whereas elsewhere in the country we have largely only seen sporadic short term competition to win the local monopoly – so called bus wars where the victor then settles back into monopolistic anti-consumer practices.

In 2017, the UK government passed the Bus Services Act – a tacit acknowledgement that the current deregulated bus market model is not working (and that London's model is). The new law gives combined authorities with a directly elected mayor similar powers over bus regulation to London. This had followed encouragement from the government, including via the Localism Act of 2011, for more metropolitan areas to adopt the mayoral governance model that has seen success in London since 2000.

Aside from highlighting arguments over regulation and competition practices that now appear to be largely settled (see above paragraph), the different treatment of bus services since 1986 also highlights other concerns. In recent years, London has led the way in factors specific to the bus system such as comprehensive service coverage and the convenience of contactless ticketing.

London actually retains its ability to strategically plan and manage the routes, frequency, times of operation and fares of its buses. Its model means that profitable routes can cross-subsidise less profitable routes. Additionally, the overarching TfL having control of the bus network means all the different modes of public transport can be organised to deliver better travel options to all. We need these powers in Leeds and the greater West Yorkshire area to be able to deliver an excellent bus service. But we must go further – particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing focus on climate change and sustainability.

A fundamental reappraisal needs to reverse the current thinking which has been largely one of 'how can we move a given number of people for the least cost to the public purse' to one of a more basic approach to the demand for mobility and how that mobility relates to the social and economic wellbeing of a city or region. The mobility as a service (MaaS) approach goes some way towards this goal, in a holistic way.

MaaS is the integration of various forms of transport services into a single mobility service accessible on demand. To meet a customer's request, a MaaS operator facilitates a diverse menu of transport options, be they public transport, car or bike-sharing, taxi or car rental/lease, or a combination of. For the users, MaaS can offer added value through use of a single application to provide access to mobility, with a single payment channel instead of multiple ticketing and payment operations. It can help them meet their mobility needs and solve the inconvenient parts of individual journeys as well as the entire system of mobility services. A successful MaaS service also brings new ways to organise and operate the various transport options, with advantages for transport operators including access to improved user and demand information and new opportunities to serve unmet demand. The aim of MaaS is to provide an alternative to the use of the private car that may be as convenient, more sustainable, help to reduce congestion and constraints in transport capacity, and can be even cheaper.

MaaS does not just involve the integration of various modes of mobility service (such as the bus service). In many instances, it entails the introduction of new forms of transportation, such as bicycle sharing, car sharing and other innovative forms of demand-responsive transportation, and supplements the existing public transportation systems.

One of the biggest problems faced by commuters when using public transportation is the first mile and last mile connectivity. Bicycle sharing systems enables users to borrow a bicycle for a short period of time for a small fee. Recent years have seen an influx of 'free-floating' bicycle sharing

3. Litter Bins at Bus Stops – Jane Ellis

Prize Winner

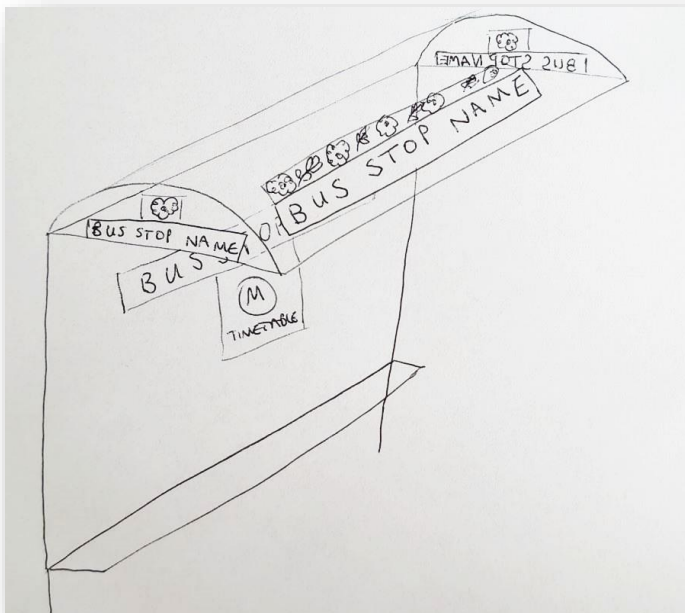
A fundamental and simple suggestion, the judges agreed that this should become standard practice across West Yorkshire: ensuring that each bus stop has a litter bin.

Jane submitted a photo of her local bus stop on Wetherby Road (right) surrounded by litter, which the judges (particularly Niels) could not believe was true. Why not have a general upgrade of all bus stops in Leeds?



4. Named Bus Stops – Gareth Brown

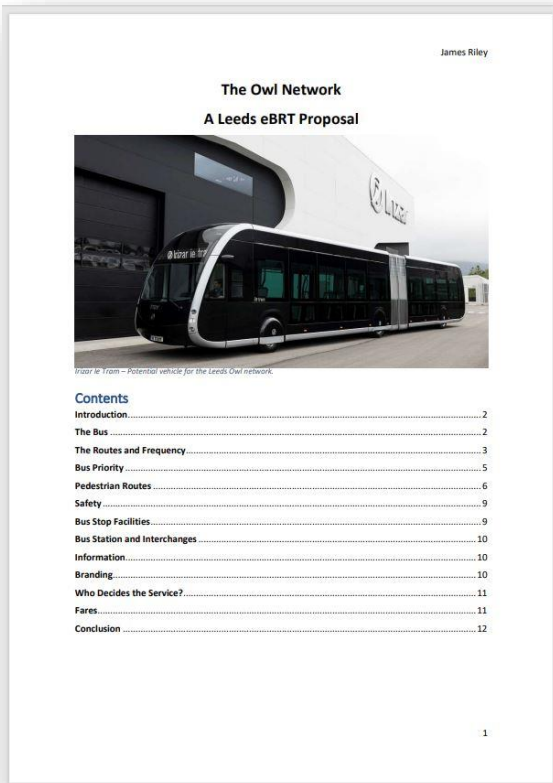
Highly Commended



A simple, cheap yet effective idea: clearly marking each bus stop with a bus stop name.

Helping people to know when to alight and which bus stop to wait at, the judges liked how this submission as it identifies a real problem with clarity on the solution.

5. The Owl Network – James Riley



**Highly
Commended**

A highly ambitious submission which clearly describes how Leeds could adopt a tyred based electric Bus Rapid Transit System (eBRT). Drawing from examples of eBRT from around the world, the judges commended James for clearly outlining proposals for bus priority, core routes, fares, safety, branding and pedestrian priority.

6. Bus Manifesto – Our Future Leeds

**Highly
Commended**

An ambitious idea of providing West Yorkshire with a free, electric and community-controlled bus service. The judges commended this entry for being innovative and progressive, and for clearly articulating the social, environmental and economic benefits of these improvements.



7. Bus Improvements – Aireborough Civic Society



Providing clear solutions to the identified problems, the judges praised this entry for being detailed, thorough and focusing on practical solutions and steps forward for Leeds. According to the judges, this was a “well researched and effective submission”.

‘Imagine an Excellent Bus Service for Leeds’

TWELVE Priorities for Bus Improvements in Leeds

The vision for WYCA is: “West Yorkshire needs a bus system that is seamlessly integrated with other modes of transport and focuses on the needs of its current and future customers. Our vision is to deliver a bus network that people can rely on, with quick, punctual and reliable services that are simple and easy to use, are accessible for everyone, and which provide safe and comfortable travel, offering value for money to users.”

The ambition for Leeds CC is: “Our aim within 10 years, is for Leeds to have an exemplar public transport service with patronage double the current level. To do this we need to be bold with our decisions and prioritise bus users.”

We fully support these intentions and are looking to work with all to produce a plan for achieving the above.

Better Bus Services Are Good for Everyone

The More People Who Use Buses Means:

- 1 Fewer cars on the roads
- 2 Less land needed for parking
- 3 Pollution reduced
- 4 Congestion reduced (NB car drivers also benefit from this!)
- 5 Should result in reduced bus fares by reducing costs

If half of car drivers transferred to buses, think how much quicker it would be for all road users, saving millions of pounds in fuel and also saving time wasted in queuing. Elaborate, expensive new road schemes would be unnecessary.

8. Network Spider Diagrams – Jonathan Hui



Excellent Buses in Leeds

Better Information for Bus Users

Currently, most of the West Yorkshire bus stops have confusing bus stop information on the bus stop flags. These are in their current form since 2003 or so where the bus stop flags only indicate a “buses towards” direction rather than all the service route numbers.

This is particularly confusing where there is more than one bus stop along a stretch of road where buses run in a similar direction. This is slowly changing with the gradual roll-out of newer bus stop flags showing the route numbers.

In addition to this, more information for passengers is required for starting or continuing their journey. There are some stops now in Leeds which display a summarised version of the core network map (where bus services are shown which run every 15 minutes or better). The further information would be useful in the form of bus spider network diagrams which shows every bus route which serves a particular stop – even those which are infrequent.

A local information or local bus route version of this would also be useful for particular suburbs or districts in Leeds such as a local bus station where the map can be centred.

An example of a centralised spider map diagram:

This shows a quick and easy-to-understand reference in a summarised format of where to catch your bus and where the services serve in a simple format with a bit of description.

Better Information for Planned Diversions

Further to the theme of diagrammatic plans, the current planned diversions information provided by WYCA is very text-heavy. Although this will suit a lot of users of this information, supplementing this

A detailed report highlighting how to provide better information for bus users, Jonathan demonstrated his ideas successfully through a series of network diagrams and accompanying descriptions. Clearly very familiar with the bus routes and plans in Leeds, the judges commended Jonathan on the pragmatism and detail of this submission.

9. Imagine Excellent Buses – Penelope Milner

**Highly
Commended**

A well written report which proposes imaginative improvements for a bus app, lower fares, clearer pedestrian routes to bus stops, and improved bus infrastructure. The judges commended this entry for having highly ambitious and strategic ideas which would go a long way in reaching our sustainability goals as a city.



10. Excellent Buses Report – Paras Shah

**Prize
Winner**

Brief & Background

The need for this report comes from a need to better understand the bus services in Leeds and how they can be improved for the future, including imagining the future of public transport in the area.

Leeds is a major city in the UK, with a population of over 780,000 including approximately 70,000 students. It is well connected to other cities via road networks and train networks. However within the city it is a challenge to use public transport, easily, safely or conveniently. Whilst the core of the city centre is largely walkable and pedestrian friendly, accessing and navigating near and around the core is much more challenging. Leeds has increasingly become a car dominated city, highlighted by roads such as the A58 and A64.

Buses are very important in connecting the city to other areas in the region, beyond the core. This report explores the need for improving the services, including looking at the services, demographics and the future of public transport.

'Bus' Culture

Bus usage is extremely important in commuting all sorts of people for all types of reasons. The reliability and affordability of bus services are a lifeline to some people and therefore a network which reflects and exceeds these are important.

Geography of Leeds

Leeds has a central core followed by a wider outer region. Both of these are road dominated areas, with the core having several road restrictions e.g. one way streets. These would need to be carefully considered in a new bus network, as well as reducing car usage. The geography of Leeds and surrounding areas should be considered when creating routes, including thinking of key points, as well as improving areas that have had no or very poor access to poor public transport before. The routes should be carefully considered especially in creating 'zones'.

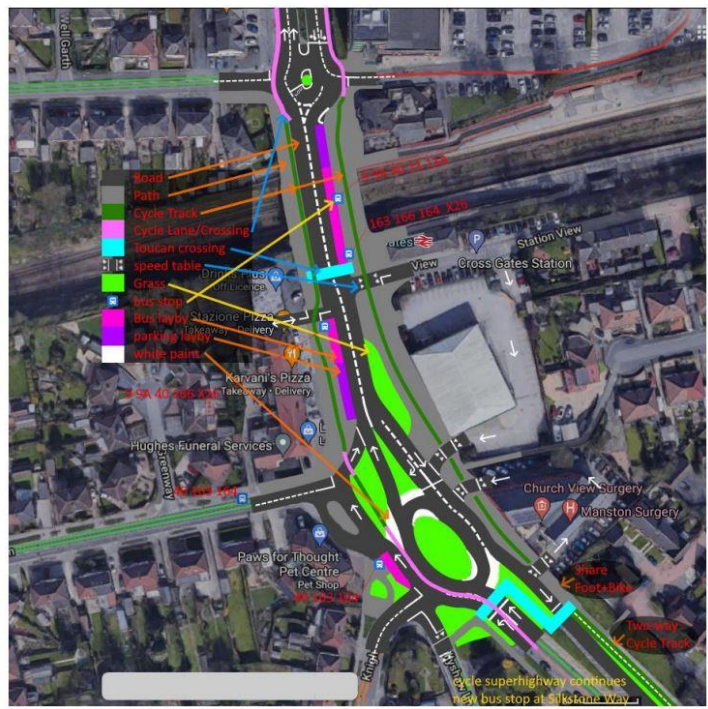
Current Problems

Below are a list of problems that currently face Leeds bus services:

- Frequency - frequency of buses are often unreliable, with large gaps in services or many services arriving in one go
- Fares - inconsistent, and to an extent, unfair pricing system. Additionally the fare system is complicated to use and navigating it with other modes of transport can be confusing.
- Lack of inter-modal or inter-changes - Leeds bus services don't provide enough cross connections - both to other bus routes as well as other key locations (often buses only come through or terminate in the city)
- Bus fleets themselves - they are slowly ageing, including uncomfortable seating, lack of modern amenities as well as one door operation

The judges were impressed by the detail and research put into this report, which clearly outlines the context of buses in Leeds and the problems we face, and provides a wealth of practical solutions which we could implement for both short- and long-term solutions.

11. Crossgates Railway Station – Joshua Freeman



Identifying the opportunity to improve the dual carriageway in Crossgates, the judges said “Joshua has clearly taken the time to analyse and visualize the solutions for the area by presenting it in a creative way. The solutions proposed could greatly improve the local environment of the area, along with the quality of the space for the local residents”.



12. LEO: Leeds Express Omnibus – Anzir Boodoo



An informative and concise poster outlining the Leeds Express Omnibus (LEO) – Bus Rapid Transit system for Leeds.

Clearly articulating the current problems at the start, the judges praised this entry for providing innovative solutions to directly overcome these issues, whilst also considering bus accessibility. Tying together many of the concepts and ideas from other entries (for instance route maps and live departure times) the judges liked how this poster presented a wealth of useful information in very a visual format.

The judges also felt that this entry showed a level of realism by showcasing practical examples from elsewhere in the UK and abroad, demonstrating that these solutions are possible - so why not implement them here in Leeds?

leo

Why?

Buses are terrible

- Opaque networks are difficult for people to understand
- Poor connectivity between routes & between bus & train
- Poor vehicles
- Paying fares takes time

We can do so much better...

- Bus lanes everywhere possible
- Reallocate roadspace from cars on roads with 2 lanes
- Priority at junctions
- Junction rebuilds for bus & cycle priority
- Busway segregated from bikes where possible
- Buses draw in to steps for close & level boarding
- Board at any door, no fares taken on board (like a tram)

excellent
electric
eco-friendly
economical

a **Bus Rapid Transit** system for Leeds

the map shows existing bus lanes and guideways (purple) and potential guideways (red) using roadspace reallocated from cars making it easier to travel by bus and reducing car use

infrastructures that work

- built on the existing network of bus lanes and guideways
- can be delivered quickly, in about 5 years
- new lanes are mainly white paint on existing roadway
- reallocating roadspace from cars enables more bus lanes
- segregated lanes from traffic and cycles for faster operation

buses that work

- the double deck single entrance bus is horribly inefficient with loading
- electric for speed and emissions
- multi door boarding means less time at stops
- standard buses like the Mercedes-Benz eCitaro (above) are cheaper than custom
- level boarding at steps for maximum accessibility

networks that work

- connectivity between bus and train with new stations where main bus routes meet rail lines
- better connectivity between bus routes with shared interchanges
- adapting routes so for example 1 goes to White Rose and 19 to Hell Park instead of stopping short
- integrated bus/train tickets - change from bus to train or travel one way by train & the other by bus

why is leo fast and cheap?

level boarding by any door means less time at stops which means faster journeys which means fewer buses & drivers for the same service level which is cheaper to run everyone happy

in Reading, buses show the live train departure board when approaching a station

steps that work

- fully level boarding with no gaps (see right) for maximum accessibility
- board at any door for speed
- steps organised at "stations" (like tram stations) with connecting "platforms" shown
- full connection information between bus and train

Philias in the Netherlands is a Bus Rapid Transit system with level and close boarding

routes that work

- some routes on the core network are very bendy
- using the existing priority infrastructure, new routes can be built which maximise use of bus lanes
- bus lane infrastructure goes close to some places like Cross Green but doesn't serve them well
- areas with low car ownership need better service
- routes to better connect schools, shopping & leisure
- bus lanes in the middle of the road reduce conflict with turning movements, especially with right turns banned

centre bus lanes (Albany) (credit: NACTD)

buses coloured by route (Reading)

tram like BRT stop (Rotterdam) (credit: omgje/istock)

leo works for Leeds!

Anzir Boodoo
Chair (West & North Yorkshire), CILT (UK)
Car Free Cities Consultant, Possible
Urbanist, Summit 1, Fenton

LeedsCity Bus	leo Bus
110 passengers	145 passengers
1 door	3 or 4 doors
18m max seat to door	7m max seat to door

A TIME FOR CHANGE



Next steps

Finally, we'd like to thank each and every person who took the time to submit their idea(s) to this competition. Each submission (no matter how big or small the idea) will form a part of the wider 'Imagine an Excellent Bus Service for Leeds' project and will be taken into consideration in the final project report, due to be released in the autumn of 2021.

Our aim with this competition was to spark a wider conversation about buses in Leeds, to see what innovative ideas the people of Leeds had. For now, we look forward to taking these ideas and suggestions forward to the Local Transport Authority, bus operators and other key stakeholders to positively influence the future of bus travel in Leeds.





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