**York Bus Forum Meeting Tuesday 16th March 17.30, by Zoom**

Attending: Doreen Magill (Chair), Graham Collett (Vice Chair), Niall McFerran (Secretary), Nicola Small (Speaker), Duncan Miller, Tony Hudson, Lionel Lennox, Elanor Tew, Kevin Fradley, Mary Fairbrother, Ben Hughes, Julian Ridge (CYC), Dave Merrett, John Bibby, Gail Shuttleworth, Tony May, John Slaughter, Gordon Smith, Jim from Harbus, Eden Blyth, Martin Higginson, Richard Parker, James Outterson, Mo Sandland, Peter Jarman, George Wood, Roger Pierce, Nick Beckett, Huw Kane, Eden Blyth, Geoff Beacon, Chris Love, Kevin Smith

1. DMag. Welcomed attendees and thanked our speaker, Apologies had been received from; Ed Pearson, Brandon Jones, Ian Anderson, Gwen Vardigans
2. The minutes of the Feb.16th meeting were approved. NM read out a response from Brandon Jones of First on the questions raised regarding door design and electric bus running costs. The door issue is always under consideration but remains problematic as it reduces seating capacity, the full long-term costs of electric buses will be better understood when battery replacements are considered.
3. Nicloa Small of Coventry Council gave a presentation on the option of Very Light Railway systems providing a low pollution rapid transport scheme.

Key points:

Large increase in number of passenger journeys by tram in last 20 years.

Tram installation costs around £35-50M/ Km. whereas the target cost for VLR is £10M/Km.

Cost savings also come from smaller/lighter battery-operated vehicles (56 capacity), less track depth (300mm.), no overhead wires.

Still in research phase, current battery range 20Km., shorter and more manoeuvrable than trams and the possibility to be autonomous.

Intended commissioning date 2024/5 other authorities already showing interest. High degree of UK manufacturing in system.

TM asked about whether the VLR can integrate with other road traffic? NS responded yes.

Dmag. Asked about the width of the vehicle as the streets of York are narrow, NS responded that it was designed to be equivalent to a bus. With a 15m. turning circle.

EB asked if it could be used on normal rail lines? NS said this was to be determined.

GC asked if the lighter rails would reduce risk to cyclists? NS said there will still be need to take care and the other concern was potential damage from other vehicles.

GB asked if other funding models had been considered to pay for installation eg road pricing of development money. NS said road pricing would be unlikely, but the latter may be considered.

KF asked how wheelchair users could be accommodated inside the cabin, NS responded that there would be anchor points.

DMag. Asked if it would be possible to have bikes and dogs inside cabin? NS said this had not been determined yet.

BH asked about axle weight and potential road damage. NS answered that the weight would be 3-4 tonnes per axle.

NM asked whether ramps would be required to gain access to the vehicle? NS responded that it is anticipated that normal pavement height will be sufficient.

LL asked if vehicles could be joined together to expand capacity? NS said it would not be possible to join the vehicles, but they could run closely together particularly when autonomous systems were developed.

RP asked if the appearance of the vehicle raised concerns. NS said initial responses were very positive.

NB asked if the business model would work in other cities? NS said there may be opportunities to develop public/private partnerships to provide funding.

DMag thanked the speaker for a thought-provoking presentation.

1. DMag. Raised concerns regarding changes to the level of bus services in the city. JR responded that pre-Covid levels should be restored after April 12th. It was asked if the Park and Ride services, currently No.2 would continue to make intermediary stops? JR responded that this was under consideration. TH and GS asked about the arrangements for the No.10 service around Coppergate and Piccadilly would be improved? JR said again this is under review and took on board comments regarding the poor bus stop in Piccadilly.

NM delivered Secretaries report: The YBF will ensure we are part of the local consultation for the government’s new Build Better Bus plan which is an item for the next meetings. We have approached the local Councillor groups for follow up meetings and are awaiting dates. The Improving York’s Bus Stops initiative will commence May-June and involve Age Friendly Citizen group and York Disability Rights Forum. NM asked JR to help in getting a follow-up meeting with the iTravel team as the discussions had stalled.

1. Date of next meeting Tuesday 16th April, the subject is “Rapid Bus Transport”