

# 'Exciting' opportunity for West Yorkshire mass transit system

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An “exciting” opportunity which could help West Yorkshire build a brand new mass transit system has been discussed by regional leaders.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) released preliminary plans earlier this year to create a rail-based mass transit network – possibly a tram system – to cover the whole of West [Yorkshire](#).

The Intra-city [Transport](#) Fund is a £4.2bn government scheme, which will be split between eight mayoral authorities. However, the amount of money received by each authority will be dependent on the quality of its plans, meaning each authority must bid for a slice.

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The Government also has a tight deadline for all bids, requiring them to be submitted by the end of August.

However, West Yorkshire Mayor Tracy Brabin said she was optimistic this could be done, telling a WYCA meeting: “This is an exciting opportunity with large amounts of money. We

have a talented bid writing team.

“There is a high and a low funding range which will guide our bid. Our understanding is that everyone will get something between that range.”

She added there would be an expectation to spend the money on low carbon facilities, to increase travel by bike and walking and to reduce dependency on cars.

Mayor Brabin added: “We want this funding to make substantial progress on the new mass transit network and to make a difference to our bus offer.

She said that, as the timescale on submitting the bid was so tight, there would be no scope to discuss it again, and that any decision on submitting the bid should therefore be delegated to senior WYCA officers.

The embryonic mass transit plans suggest such a system could include nine lines and dozens of stops, including Leeds Bradford Airport, Leeds General Infirmary, St James’s Hospital, Elland Road and the White Rose Centre.

Unlike previous proposals, the scheme covers the whole of the region, stretching to Huddersfield, Halifax, Pontefract, Bradford and Wakefield.

WYCA believes construction could start on lines as early as 2025, with priority given to those in and around Leeds. If all goes to plan, the final scheme could be completed at early as 2040.

Whatever slice WYCA gets from the £4.2bn fund is hoped to go some way towards creating the network.

Bradford Council leader Susan Hinchcliffe said: “This is a really exciting opportunity. We wouldn’t be sat here now having this conversation if we didn’t have devolution.

“Intra-city connectivity is important. We just don’t have that between each other and it holds us back as an economy. If we could get more quickly to Wakefield, Huddersfield, Bradford and Halifax, our economy would propel forward at a much greater rate.

“It is major infrastructure that we haven’t had before. This is what you get into politics to do – to make a lasting difference to people’s lives and to the economy.

“It’s not about the richest areas getting the most from Government.”

WYCA transport committee chair Coun Kim Groves added: “The people of West Yorkshire can’t wait another 10 years waiting for this.”

Plans to build a £250m trolley bus network in Leeds were scrapped at the eleventh hour by Government in 2016, after a report from a planning inspector said the scheme was “not in the public interest”. It followed two other failed Leeds schemes devised in the late 1980s and late 1990s.

It had been hoped that, by 2018, electric buses powered by overhead wires would be running across the city on a north/south route every six minutes during peak times.

But this was scrapped four years later when transport minister Lord Ahmad accepted a planning inspector’s recommendation the scheme should not go ahead.

More than £70m had been spent on the trolleybus scheme and its predecessor Supertram.

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