

Annex C: Communications Plan for Our Big Transport Conversation

Introduction

Our Big Transport Conversation (OBTC) is a highly significant public consultation and outreach programme on a scale not seen before in York. It will encompass every mode of transport and allow City of York Council (CYC) to hear the views and voices of York in how best to deliver a new set of transport principles, which are aligned to the Council Plan 2023-2037. OBTC will also enable us to go on to develop several important statutory plans, including the Local Transport Plan and LCWIP.

OBTC comes at a time when transport issues dominate the headlines and political scene, from Westminster to Gillygate. It also comes as we move towards devolution and funding negotiations, and at a time when the new Council Plan has set out four key commitments for the city; these things combined mean that it is more important than ever that we consult on transport, and ensure that the key commitments in the Council Plan are upheld.

These core commitments are:

Equalities and Human Rights - Equality of opportunity: We will create opportunities for all, providing equal opportunity and balancing the human rights of everyone to ensure residents and visitors alike can benefit from the city and its strengths. We will stand up to hate and work hard to champion our communities.

Affordability - Tackling the cost-of-living crisis: We will find new ways so everyone who lives here benefits from the success of the city, targeting our support at those who need it most, supporting communities to build on their own strengths and those of the people around them.

Climate - Environment and the climate emergency: We know the race to net zero is more urgent than ever and we will understand the impact our actions have on the environment. We will prepare for the future, adapting our city to extreme climate events and enhancing our environment for future generations to enjoy.

Health - Health and wellbeing: We will improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities, taking a Health in All Policies approach, with good education, jobs, travel, housing, better access to health and social care services and environmental sustainability. We will achieve better outcomes by targeting areas of deprivation, aiming to level opportunity across the city.

The consultation explores CYC's transport objectives and how we propose to reach them, covering every aspect of movement in the city, from tackling climate change and improving air quality, to traffic enforcement and freight movements, and offering alternatives to driving cars by improving networks for people to walk, wheel and use sustainable travel. It will not, however, go into specific detail on individual schemes; this will need to follow once the principles have been consulted on.

In short, CYC will need a significant programme of media engagement to ensure that everyone knows we are actively seeking views from all who travel in York. The programme of media activity will stretch across the 11-week consultation period to ensure that everyone has had ample opportunity to hear about it, and take part. Media work will involve not just local media but national media, to help position the authority as taking action to future-proof the networks.

This document sets out the media and communications strategy; it should be read in conjunction with the engagement strategy, which sets out how we propose to deliver consultation materials both on- and off-line, to a wide audience.

1. Objectives

The key objectives for the OBTC are:

Think

- To enforce the message that the Local Transport Plan is for *all* of York, not just the city centre; we want to better understand how everyone moves around, whether it's between villages, from the city centre outwards or inwards, or between local authority boundaries, and that we will listen to all comments
- Explaining the process and structure of the consultation and what will happen next
- Clearly set out the topics for discussion/influence, and the topics which are already agreed/funded/set out in policy.

Feel

- Residents and stakeholders feel engaged and informed about the consultation process
- Residents feel that the project will improve the city's daily travel needs

Do

- Residents and stakeholders engage with the project and provide feedback

2. Audience / insight

Due to the wide range of transport aspirations being consulted on, we need to reach every one who uses any aspect of the transport network in York, whether it's walking, driving, wheeling or on public transport, or a mix of any of these, no matter how often. As such, this consultation is being designed from the outset as fully proactive, inclusive and accessible to all.

The language used will be very important; we need to communicate the transport proposals – which can, by its nature, be technically quite 'heavy' – in human terms, using a style which resonates with the people of York. We will for example talk about journeys and moving around the city rather than trip generators. We will also ensure that all audiences appreciate that different people move around the city in different ways and that CYC is proposing to offer more options to everyone. Following recent announcements, there is also work to be done to counter balance the national narrative of 'us versus them' with car drivers and ensure that York's transport offer is as diverse as its population.

OBTC will be an 11-week consultation process, offering opportunities for people to read and digest the information most relevant to them, and respond in their own time. Media work will be run on a rolling basis to ensure the consultation remains in people's minds (see 'Implementation' section below for more on this).

It is often said in consultations that some groups are 'hard to reach' – but this doesn't have to apply to us. Due to CYC's existing proactive work with community groups and networks across the city, we have an opportunity to reach people who don't normally engage with public consultations; an opportunity to make the subject interesting and relevant to them, and to understand how the current network helps or

hinders them, and how it can be improved. A lot of progress has been made in this regard over the last six months and lessons learned from previous consultations which fell short of being truly inclusive.

Stakeholder mapping is being refreshed and will ensure that the right people are reaching out to each network; an email or invite from a known contact has much more weight than faceless engagement. The mapping identifies those groups we will produce toolkits to share with, in essence, easily understood, engaging and informative versions of the 'official' documents, for groups and individuals to digest in their own time.

Ensuring targeted opportunities are delivered from the start of the process, we will utilise a range of tools to reach each audience, including but not limited to:

- Children & young people: a programme of school & college outreach work to go and speak to young people directly; utilising social media; working collaboratively with the Youth Council
- Disabled people: a dedicated programme of activity is being produced and will include attending in-person events and online material to ensure that everyone can have their voice heard; awareness will be raised by local media; social media networks and existing groups (eg Disability Access Forum)
- Commuters: to better understand commuter choices, we will target non-York specific media outlets and work with partners in North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and East Riding to help share our materials
- Businesses: existing networks such as the BID will be utilised and information shared via these trusted sources
- Specifically for the two major trip generators in the city, the hospital and universities, we will target them using their internal comms networks

We also envisage that during the 11-week process we may be able to use some of the above work as case studies and invite the media to cover the work being done, to further encourage people to take part.

3. Strategy / ideas

The media strategy has one key goal: to make as many people as possible aware of the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

Nine Policy Focus Areas, or themes, have been identified for us to engage the community with. Each of these nine themes will have 'deep dive' which are, in some cases, specifically aimed at producing further policy documents (for example the LCWIP and the AQAP4 – which will be drafted based on this round of consultation, with further engagement to follow on those specific issues).

Throughout all the media work, from launch to follow up, each of these nine areas will be clearly communicated and always represented in the same way, to ensure they are familiar to people responding to the consultation.

People will be able to answer questions from whichever themes interest them most: they will not have to respond to each and every theme. We will invite people to tell us more about how they get around, where their areas of concern may be, and how we can begin to address them. Sitting above the nine themes will be a set of questions related to demographic data, so that we can analyse who has responded and any areas where gaps are emerging.

The nine themes are:

1. **Accessibility:** shaping a city that is accessible to everyone

2. **Walking, wheeling & cycling:** create real alternatives to car use
3. **Shaping healthy places:** ensuring all communities feel safe and included, and within easy reach via improved streets and places
4. **Public transport:** building a reliable and accessible network to allow people to make, and continue to make, choices which reduce congestion and harmful pollution
5. **Climate change:** safeguarding our environment, reducing congestion and improving air quality and everybody's health
6. **Creating better networks and connections for people to use:** a Movement & Place plan to create safe networks
7. **Reducing car dependency:** but first offer real alternatives
8. **Freight and logistics:** ensuring efficient access while reducing the impact of heavy, more polluting vehicles
9. **Effective maintenance and enforcement:** allowing greater use of the networks by creating safer spaces

4. Implementation

OBTC is a wide-ranging set of information and we have carefully considered how this should be broken down and made easier to digest, by both the media and by the wider community. CYC spokespeople made available for interviews and comments will be Cllr Pete Kilbane and Cllr Kate Ravillious.

In addition to the consultation materials, we will write a full suite of supporting documents ahead of the launch:

- October-November: Internal review and if possible, peer review of public-facing materials and questions
- Early November: Internal briefings for staff and Members and Local Area Committee co-ordinators. Briefing packs will be given to Ward Members to help in their discussions with constituents.
- Early November: Arrange in-person meetings with city-wide delivery partners, eg police, fire, utilities
- Create posters and advertising materials for libraries, gyms, leisure centres
- Draft key messages
- Draft Q&A
- Draft briefing documents for Members and staff working on consultation events
- Proactive selling in of interviews and feature ideas on the scale and opportunity offered by the consultation – to local, regional and national media

Working with partners will also be an important part of communicating the consultation, and we will soon begin discussing with them around how they can help us share the consultation news, including via social media and their own, in-person networks. These partners include the NHS Trust and universities, as between them these two are among the largest trip generators. Working with partners will also help us reach commuters and those who travel into the CYC area from surrounding authorities, as we also need to understand their travel habits. In order to reach commuters, we will also use assets available to us such as bus stop screens and Variable Messaging Signs on major routes.

We also have a series of Forums and groups which are run by CYC officers, including the Bus Forum, Older People's Forum, Disability Forum and York Youth Council and all of which will be engaged from the outset (and in many cases, have already had updates and briefings on the consultation). In short, we will go to these groups and engage with them directly rather than expect them to come to us.

CYC also has a set of social media accounts which will be utilised for sharing information:

- Twitter/X: 49,600 followers
- Facebook: 17,000 followers
- Next Door: 28,660 followers
- Instagram: 3,664 followers
- LinkedIn

Our own newsletters – residents, families, schools, staff which between them have over 7,000 subscribers. These are shortly to be ported over to the Gov.delivery platform which will enable us to email residents targeted, relevant communications and to assess how successful these communications are.

Launch:

- Press release to be issued to:
 - national – targeted work with the Guardian, Financial Times, Channel 4 News, in addition to a press release issued widely to transport, environment and ‘northern’ broadsheet correspondents
 - regional – Yorkshire Post; BBC Look North; ITV Calendar
 - local – York Press, YO1 Radio; York Mix; family media eg Mumbler, Families Magazine etc
 - transport trade press – Local Transport Today, Transport Times etc
 - cycling/commuting media – road.cc, Cycling Weekly
- There will also be a launch event, including a media briefing to engage key journalists

It is also important to note that the media campaign will be a rolling one. During the 11 week consultation process we will highlight specific issues in the local and regional media, as well as using these to help share the dates of the in-person drop in sessions that we will be setting up.

We will also use local media to help us target any particular group or interest area where we identify that we have not had a representative level of responses to the consultation; by using Citizen Space we will be able to monitor the demographics of the respondents, and target work accordingly.

5. Scoring/Evaluation

Citizen Space analytics tools will allow us to constantly monitor the responses coming in, and so we can target any specific groups, demographics, or geographical areas that have not yet submitted representative samples. It also means that once the consultation is closed, we will be able to analyse responses based on any number of ‘layers’ – for example we can cross reference whether women have identified particular areas of concern, or disabled people, or young people.

Metrics of evaluation will cover:

- Volume of interest
- Sentiment of media coverage
- Engagement incl web hits, social media comments, clicks etc
- Sentiment of social media coverage, comments etc
- Sentiment from residents and stakeholders

6. Next steps and timeframe – see also project Gantt chart

Date	Action	Lead
5 - 6 October	Comms Plan drafting	LT
5 – 6 October	Scrutiny Session paper drafting	LT / CF
10 October	Commission artwork, graphics needed from external sources Commission schools outreach?	JR / LT
10 / 11 October	Submit Scrutiny paper	CF
12 October	Executive session to discuss LTP strategy & plan	JR
13 – 24 October	Drafting materials based on submission to Scrutiny on 24 Oct	LT / comms
16 October	Scrutiny papers published	
16 October	Begin to build Citizen Space – nine themes plus overarching messages	
24 October	Scrutiny Session	
25 Oct – 16 Nov	Continue drafting materials	LT / comms
16 November	Executive Member Decision Session	JR
16 – 18 Nov	Any amends to materials	LT / comms
20 November (Monday)	LAUNCH DAY – go live on Citizen Space; press release to announce themes and series of events	All!
4 – 15 December	In person events (not including CYC attending others groups sessions)	LT
8 – 15 January 2024	In person events as above, to give 2 x 2 week blocks of events	LT
4 February	Our Big Transport Conversation consultation closes	
5 February	Analysis & report writing	Business Intel / JR
Tbc around 21 March 2024	Full Council – tbc adoption of LTP	

ENDS