Bus network changes 2027-29

Your questions, answered.

SYPN

General

What is bus franchising?

'Bus franchising', or 'taking buses back under public control', means bus services in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield will soon be planned locally by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. This means we'll decide bus routes, timetables and fares. We'll also set standards for punctuality, customer service and safety. Bus operators will still run the services, but they'll do so under contract to us.

The new network will be introduced in phases between 2027 and 2029, as part of the South Yorkshire People's Network (SYPN), which is our plan for better, more joined-up public transport.

When is it happening?

It's a major change, and the work will be completed in phases between 2027 and 2029. You'll start to see improvements in Doncaster and parts of Sheffield from September 2027, with Barnsley and Rotherham following in 2028 and the rest of Sheffield in 2029.

Why is it taking so long?

The decision to franchise bus services was taken in 2025, and the new network will be introduced in phases between 2027 and 2029. Changing the way buses are planned and run across South Yorkshire is a big job. It means putting new contracts in place, ordering new buses, deciding how tickets will work and making sure bus depots, drivers and staff are ready. Introducing the changes in phases helps us learn and make improvements as we go, while keeping buses running for passengers throughout the transition period.

How much does it cost?

Bringing buses under public control in South Yorkshire will cost around £420 million over three years. This investment will help us purchase around 650 new buses, buy and upgrade bus depots to house brand new buses, and fund improvements to ticketing, safety and customer service.

Why are improvements coming to Sheffield and Doncaster before Rotherham and Barnsley?

It's a big change to the way buses are run so we need to do it in phases, to help get it right. Sheffield is in the first phase because it's the largest and busiest part of the bus network, with around 60% of services running in and out of the city.

Doncaster was also chosen for the first phase because, at the time the phasing decisions were made, it was the only depot already owned by us, making it the most practical place to begin. We have since purchased the remaining depots, and Rotherham and Barnsley will follow in the second phase in 2028. The whole South Yorkshire bus network will be under public control as part of the South Yorkshire People's Network by 2029.

What do you mean by the 'day one network'?

The day one network is the first bus network you'll see when buses first come under public control as part of the People's Network. 'Day one' will be different depending on where you live and what service you use.

We're introducing this in stages:

- September 2027: Doncaster and most of Sheffield.
- Autumn 2028: Barnsley and Rotherham.
- Autumn 2029: the remaining services in Sheffield.

Some services in Barnsley and Rotherham will come under public control earlier, so the date depends on which bus you use. These plans are our starting point, and we'll continue to develop and improve the network over time.

What changes are you making?

Our priority is to help more buses run on time. To do this, we'll set clear standards for punctuality and hold operators to account when services are late or don't turn up.

Most journeys will remain familiar. We'll make targeted changes to help the network run better, including:

- Making sure buses turn up when they are supposed to
- A simpler network where buses run the same way – all day, every day
- Higher frequencies on many services, and bigger buses to ease crowding on the busiest corridors
- More buses running in the evenings and on Sundays
- New connections to hospitals and major employment sites such as Advanced Manufacturing Park and Sheffield Business Park
- Better co-ordination between timetables and with other modes
- A ticketing strategy which makes it easier to use the full bus and tram network
- A new numbering system

Changes will be introduced gradually as different parts of the network come under public control.

Why aren't you making improvements to every service?

We need to understand how people use buses before we can redesign the whole network.

As more bus services come under public control, we'll learn more about how people travel and where changes are needed. This will help us plan bigger improvements and make the best use of the funding available.

In the meantime, we're using passenger feedback and working with local councils to make improvements where they will make the biggest difference.

How can I check if my bus is changing?

You can check what's changing and view maps for your area here. Draft timetables will follow later:

- Spring 2027 for Doncaster
- Spring 2027 for services in Sheffield currently operated by First Bus
- Spring 2028 for Barnsley and Rotherham
- Spring 2029 for the remaining services in Sheffield currently operated by Stagecoach.

How can I give feedback?

We want to understand, are the maps clear and easy to use? Is the information easy to understand? Tell us through our online form. There's also space for any other comments, and we'll read and consider everything you send us.

Why are you not asking for feedback on the service changes?

The plans have been developed with South Yorkshire's four local councils as well as other partners who have told us what improvements are needed. We've also reviewed thousands of comments from passengers which gives us a clear picture of what's not working as well as it should.

Once the bus network is fully under public control, we'll carry out a wider review and redesign of the network. Passengers, communities and partners will have the opportunity to help shape those future changes.

Are the changes final?

The plans for the new network have been agreed with South Yorkshire's four local councils, and we're not expecting to make any major changes before launch.

Once we appoint bus operators to run the services, we may make small adjustments to services, stops or timetables. If anything changes, we'll let people know before services start and explain what it means for their journeys.

Timetables and updated maps will be published in the spring before each phase starts.

Routes

Which routes are changing?

You can view all changes here.

Which routes are getting more evening services?

More than 40 routes will see improvements with services running twice as often, for example every hour instead of every two hours. You can check if your journey is changing, here.

Where will there be more Sunday buses?

Routes which already have a Sunday service will run hourly as a minimum and in some places half hourly. You can check if your journey is changing, here.

Are any new services being introduced?

Yes. We're adding new links and extending some routes, as well as introducing evening and Sunday buses on some routes that currently have none.

These changes will help fill gaps in the network and help connect more people to a bus service.

You can check our plans, here.

Are any routes being cut?

We're not reducing the overall number of services. Your usual bus might be renumbered, or you may see two routes combined into one, or a change to the route. These changes are designed to make journeys simpler, improve connections and help buses run on time.

Where a service changes, we will explain other options available and the reason for the change.

How will this make buses more reliable?

Planning our buses as one network means we can look at the whole picture and coordinate routes and timetables, so they work better together. Where several routes use the same busy road, we can space services more evenly to help reduce buses arriving together, followed by a long wait.

Will routes that have been lost over the years, be reinstated?

We know people feel strongly about routes that have been lost over the years. Our priority is to bring the existing network under public control and make changes so services run more reliably.

Once all services are under public control, we'll review where routes could be improved or reinstated, using passenger feedback and travel data. We can't promise that every lost route will return, but we'll consider where changes would make the biggest difference within the funding available.

What's being done to increase routes in rural areas?

Most rural and village routes will stay broadly the same when we first take control of bus services. We'll restore some evening and Sunday journeys, including bringing some services back to hourly instead of every two hours.

As more buses come under public control, we'll work with local communities to review services and make further improvements, where funding allows.

Which routes will have electric buses?

You'll start to see our new electric buses in Doncaster and Sheffield from September 2027, and in Barnsley and Rotherham from autumn 2028. The routes they run on may vary from day to day, but you'll see them across the network.

If a service doesn't make a profit, will it be cancelled?

Not necessarily. We'll look at the network as a whole and the role services play in helping people get to work, education, healthcare and other everyday activities.

What will happen to cross-boundary services?

Some services that cross the South Yorkshire boundary won't be fully under our control. They'll still need to meet the standards we set, helping make journeys more consistent for passengers over time.

How will connections to hospitals and major employers be improved?

We're adding more early morning, evening and weekend buses to places like the advanced manufacturing park, industrial estates across the region and hospitals in every borough.

My journey

How can I check my journey?

You can check your journey here.

How will you reduce delays caused by traffic and roadworks?

Timetables will be developed with realistic journey times based on local traffic conditions, so buses have more time to complete their routes on busy roads.

We're also working with local councils, highways teams and bus operators to plan around roadworks and reduce disruption where we can.

Bringing services under public control will help us coordinate this better across the network.

Why isn't my route getting a better evening or Sunday service?

We know extra evening or Sunday buses are important to people. Working with local councils, we used passenger feedback and travel data to identify where extra journeys could make the biggest difference within the funding and resources available.

These are the first improvements to our network, and there will be opportunities to review services as franchising rolls out. We'll continue listening to passengers and learning more about how people travel to help shape future improvements.

Why is my bus running less often?

On some busy roads, several different services follow the same route, often at similar times. We've reduced some of that overlap so we can use those buses to create new links for communities that currently have few or no services. Where a service changes, we will explain other options available and the reason for the change.

Why is the bus no longer stopping at my stop?

Some routes will change to make journeys more direct or improve connections, which may mean your bus uses a different stop. We know this could make everyday journeys more difficult for some people. You can tell us how the change would affect your journey using this form.

Where can I check the timetable for my bus?

You can check what's changing and view maps for your area here. Draft timetables will follow later:

- Spring 2027 for Doncaster
- Spring 2027 for services in Sheffield currently operated by First Bus
- Spring 2028 for Barnsley and Rotherham
- Spring 2029 for the remaining services in Sheffield currently operated by Stagecoach

Information and customer support

How can I check if my journey is changing?

You can check what's changing and view maps for your area here. Printed service summaries and maps will be available in local libraries across the region soon.

Can you send me a printed map?

Yes, please call us on 0800 952 0002 and let us know which service you need.

Can you send me a printed feedback form?

Yes, please call us on 0800 952 0002 and we'll send you a printed form and a free post envelope.

Where can I check the timetable for my bus?

Draft timetables will be published on the following dates:

- Spring 2027 for Doncaster
- Spring 2027 for services in Sheffield currently operated by First Bus
- Spring 2028 for Barnsley and Rotherham
- Spring 2029 for the remaining services in Sheffield currently operated by Stagecoach

Will printed timetables be available?

Printed timetables will continue to be at stop and at interchange stands. Customers will also be able to download timetables online.

Will buses integrate better with trams and trains?

Our aim is to create a more joined-up public transport network over time, including planning timetables to make it easier to change between bus and tram.

Fares and tickets

Will cash payments still be accepted?

Yes, cash payments will still be accepted on board.

Who decides the prices of tickets?

Until franchising begins, bus operators will continue to set most ticket prices. From September 2027, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority will set fares for franchised bus services, taking account of any national fare schemes or requirements.

How will ticket prices be decided and where does the money go?

We'll look at how people travel, what works in other regions and the cost of running and improving services. Our aim is to keep fares as affordable as possible while funding a reliable bus network.

Will there be student, child and senior discounts?

Our aim is to offer free travel for all under-18s across South Yorkshire. We're also looking at student fares as part of the new ticketing system and will share more information later in 2027. Free travel for eligible older and disabled passengers will continue.

Will under-18s travel for free across South Yorkshire?

We're working towards free travel for all under-18s across South Yorkshire, building on the Barnsley MiCard and Sheffield City Councils free bus and tram pilot.

Will the £2 bus fare apply?

We'll work with operators to introduce this in South Yorkshire from January 2027, ahead of franchising being rolled out.

When will you share more about tickets?

We'll share more information summer 2027.

How decisions have been made

How did you decide which routes to improve?

We worked with South Yorkshire's four local councils, drawing on passenger feedback, local knowledge, travel data and industry expertise.

We prioritised changes that fill gaps in the network, help buses run more reliably and make the biggest difference for passengers within the funding and buses available.

These are the first steps. As more services come under public control, we'll use what we learn about how people travel to plan further improvements.

How did you decide which routes will get more evening and weekend services?

Passengers tell us they need more evening and Sunday buses, particularly shift workers, young people and people without a car.

We've used that feedback to identify where extra journeys would help most, looking at gaps in existing timetables and connections to workplaces, hospitals and other key destinations. We then considered the buses and funding available to decide where we could make improvements first.

How has passenger feedback influenced the new network?

People told us the biggest problem was buses arriving late or not turning up at all. That's why our priority is making changes to help services run more reliably.

We'll set clear standards and hold operators to account for meeting them and we'll plan the network with reliability in mind, making sure timetables are realistic and reflect traffic conditions.

Will you introduce bus lanes?

Local councils are responsible for bus lanes. We'll continue to work with their highways teams to look at where bus lanes and other measures could help reduce delays and keep buses moving.

How will you measure the changes, to see if they are working?

We'll monitor the network from the start, checking whether buses turn up and run on time, how many people use them, how long journeys take and what people think.

We'll use what we learn to improve services and timetables where we can and let you know about any changes.

I've given feedback about a service, but it hasn't changed. Why?

We read and consider all feedback to understand what matters to passengers and where improvements are needed.

While we can't make every change people ask for, we've made changes that address the clearest gaps and make the biggest difference for passengers. We'll continue our plans as more bus services come under public control and continue to make improvements.