

South Yorkshire People's Network

Mayor's Vision for Transport

OLIVER COPPARD
SOUTH YORKSHIRE'S MAYOR



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My Vision for Transport

Vision

I grew up in what many proudly called the People's Republic of South Yorkshire – a name we earned through grit, solidarity, and a fierce commitment to looking after one another. We stood up for our neighbours. We invested in our people and in our places. And nowhere was that spirit felt more strongly than in our transport network.

There was a time when our transport system was the envy of the world. But over the last 40 years it has been steadily dismantled; fares have risen, routes and passenger numbers have fallen, and our city centres, high streets and economy have stalled. Too many people have been let down for too long. Public transport has limited opportunity, deepened inequality, and made everyday life harder than it should be.

Part of the reason is simple; the world changed, and our transport system didn't. The way we live, work and travel has transformed. Our towns and cities have grown and moved, new industries have emerged, and expectations about how we move through our day have shifted. Yet our public transport hasn't kept pace. Too often, it has failed to offer the reliability, flexibility, accessibility, simplicity and connections modern life demands – with disruption reaching far beyond a delayed bus or tram, stretching into the rhythm of daily life.

But we also know what's possible when transport is designed around the needs of the people it serves. Reliable connections help local businesses grow, keep high streets vibrant, and make it easier for families, students and workers to plan their days with certainty. A well-designed network brings cultural spaces closer, strengthens social connections, and make our region more welcoming and more resilient. More frequent services mean opportunity can meet ambition.

But building a transport network that matches our ambition doesn't simply require us to help people get from A to B – it will create the very foundations for a region where everyone can live, work, stay near and go far.

South Yorkshire deserves better. Because when transport works, everything works. It's the thread that ties places together. It connects people to opportunity. It supports strong, healthy communities. It spreads ideas, friendships, confidence and possibility. It's time to build a transport system that helps every person, in every place, move forward.

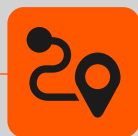
Oliver Coppard
South Yorkshire's Mayor



Why Change?

Better connections

Public transport should give us the freedom and choice about how we travel and move in South Yorkshire, but right now it doesn't. We need a public transport network that connects us to opportunity.



1 in 5 people

in South Yorkshire are at high risk of social isolation because of poor public transport, with some communities in Barnsley and Doncaster being amongst the most affected across the North. When public transport is easier to use and more accessible, more people can get into work, education, to healthcare, or just to see friends and family.

Health

Health inequalities are holding us back and limiting our economic potential. We need reliable, affordable ways to reach jobs, education and opportunity.



Cleaner air

Cleaner air and easier active travel choices will help everyone enjoy better health and opportunities.



1 in 4 people

in our region of working age are not in work. 1 in 3 of those is because of ill-health.



Almost 1 in 3 people

have said they want more reliable buses. On average, South Yorkshire's buses are over 12 years old, with a third over 15 years old. We've lost 7.6 million bus miles in the last five years. In the last few months alone, some bus fares have gone up over 20%. Taking back control of our buses will mean we decide on fares, routes and timetables. Every penny coming in from fares will be reinvested in the network. And over time, we'll have a whole new fleet of electric buses on our roads.



50,000 homes

There are plans to build over 50,000 homes across South Yorkshire over the next 10 years. Our economy is growing quickly; productivity in Rotherham has grown faster than almost anywhere in the country.



Growth

Sheffield is one of the fastest growing core cities in the UK. More and better transport options will mean we can support and sustain a fast-growing economy without creating more traffic, congestion and pollution.

Opportunities

A more joined-up public transport network will open up jobs and opportunities, helping our communities thrive and driving growth across South Yorkshire.

Sustainable

We need to invest in healthier, safer, and more sustainable ways to get around. That means making travel better for our health and kinder to the planet.



250 people

Every year, more than 250 people walking, wheeling and cycling are killed or seriously injured on our roads. Safer, better designed streets mean more people of all ages can have freedom and choice about how they travel and move with confidence, across South Yorkshire. And fewer families facing the heartbreak of losing a loved one on our roads.



1 in 20

Air pollution is a factor in around 1 in 20 deaths in South Yorkshire. A child living next to a congested, polluted road will face the same risk to their health as if they passively smoked 10 cigarettes a day. Fewer, dirtier vehicles on our roads, with more people choosing public transport and active travel will mean better air quality for all of us.

Why Investment Matters

South Yorkshire's economy has been too small for too long. Our region is full of talent, ambition and potential but our transport network is holding us back.



When it's hard to get to work, school, training or opportunity, our lives become smaller, our choices narrow and Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield pay the price.

Better transport means stronger connections that boost productivity, open up job markets, attract investment and drive innovation. That's not opinion, it's evidenced time and again.

But right now South Yorkshire is being left behind. In Sheffield, only 1 in 3 of us can reach the city centre by public transport within half an hour. In similar European cities it's a very different picture. In Bilbao and Turin 4 in 5 people can reach their city centres within 30 minutes. In Marseille, it's almost 9 in 10. Better connectivity means better access to jobs, education, culture, healthcare. Better transport means better opportunity.

And it shows in our economy. South Yorkshire has the lowest productivity of any northern region, nearly 20% below the average for England. Closing this productivity gap is worth around £8bn to our economy. When people can't access opportunity, when we can't access the jobs, training or support around us, we all suffer. Fewer opportunities for any one of us, means a smaller economy for all of us.

But we can do better. With the right investment, with ambition and a long-term plan, we can make sure everyone across South Yorkshire can stay near and go far.

We won't fix our transport network by just investing in infrastructure. Our priority is people;

- Helping us reach better jobs and earn higher wages.
- Making it easier for our businesses to invest here and thrive.
- Connecting our young people to the education that shapes their futures.
- Giving everyone freedom and choice over how they travel, not just those with a car.
- Creating a South Yorkshire where everyone can stay near and go far.

When we build the transport network we need, we'll build a bigger, better economy across South Yorkshire, unlocking the prosperity we deserve.

The Vision in Action

Principles for Our Transport Network

Freedom and Choice

Our network will connect us to the things we want to do, when we want to do them. Whether it's the fastest, cheapest, or simplest journey, a reliable, joined-up transport system with clear and easy-to-use information makes life easier and brings communities closer together.



Matching our Growth Ambitions

South Yorkshire is growing. Tens of thousands of new jobs and homes are coming to Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield. Our transport network will match our ambition, unlocking opportunity, supporting sustainable growth, and providing the infrastructure we need to support a bigger, better economy.



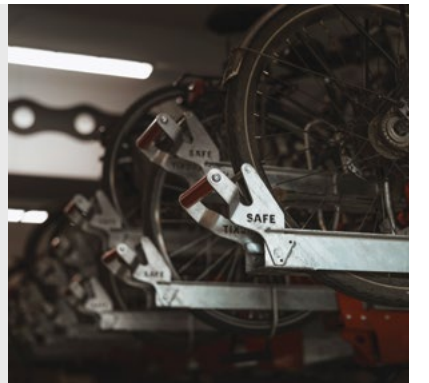
Prioritising People

Our transport network will put people first. That means reinvesting every penny to improve services shaped around our communities. That means listening and learning, constantly using feedback to shape what comes next. The South Yorkshire People's Network will be a transport system that's ours, putting the public back in public transport.



Fit for the Future

Everyday travel should be good for people and good for the planet. With electric buses, a renewed, extended tram network, more EV charging points, as well as options to walk, wheel and cycle, journeys will be kinder to the environment. Those choices will cut pollution, clean up our air and make our streets quieter, helping to build a healthier, happier South Yorkshire.



Affordable

Transport should open doors, not close them. No one should miss out because of complicated fares that cost a fortune. Fares will stay as cheap as possible, for as long as possible. And we'll have integrated tickets that can be used across different transport options too.



Safe and Easy to Use

We want roads, public spaces and transport services that are safe and welcoming for everyone, anytime, anywhere in South Yorkshire. Whether walking, cycling or using public transport, journeys will be simple and comfortable. We won't fix everything overnight, but we'll focus on change where it is needed most.





We're bringing public transport back into public control.
So that the pride stays with the people.
So that we can keep the fares fair.
So that every pound is reinvested in the system.
So that we can get our region where it needs to go.
From the peaks to the parks.
From the hills to the high streets.
From the forests to the football grounds.
It's what moves us.
And we're getting it moving again.

We run it. We use it. We own it.
The People's Network.



What's Changing?



1. Buses you can rely on
Newer buses that turn up on time, run often, stay clean and have affordable fares.



2. Trams that go further
Updated trams, brand-new vehicles, and routes to more places across South Yorkshire.



3. Shelters you want to wait in
New and improved bus and tram shelters that are clean, comfortable, and welcoming.



4. Better trains
More services on busy routes, new modern trains, and stations that are welcoming places to use.



5. Neighbourhoods to move in
Safe streets for walking, wheeling, and cycling, plus new e-bike rental schemes to make getting around by bike, easy for everyone.



6. Safer roads
Well-maintained roads and extra safety measures across the network.



7. Info that makes sense
Clear, up-to-date info at every step, and new tickets that are simple to understand.



8. Frontline help when you need it
Friendly staff visible across the network to answer questions or offer a helping hand.



Our Opportunity

High quality public transport options, whether it be, bus, tram or train are vital if we're going to build a bigger and better economy.

It helps us to switch from cars to public transport, easing congestion and supports the delivery of new homes and jobs.

This means building high-capacity public transport routes where they're needed to support housing and job growth, connecting more communities to more opportunities with services that are more reliable and easier to use.

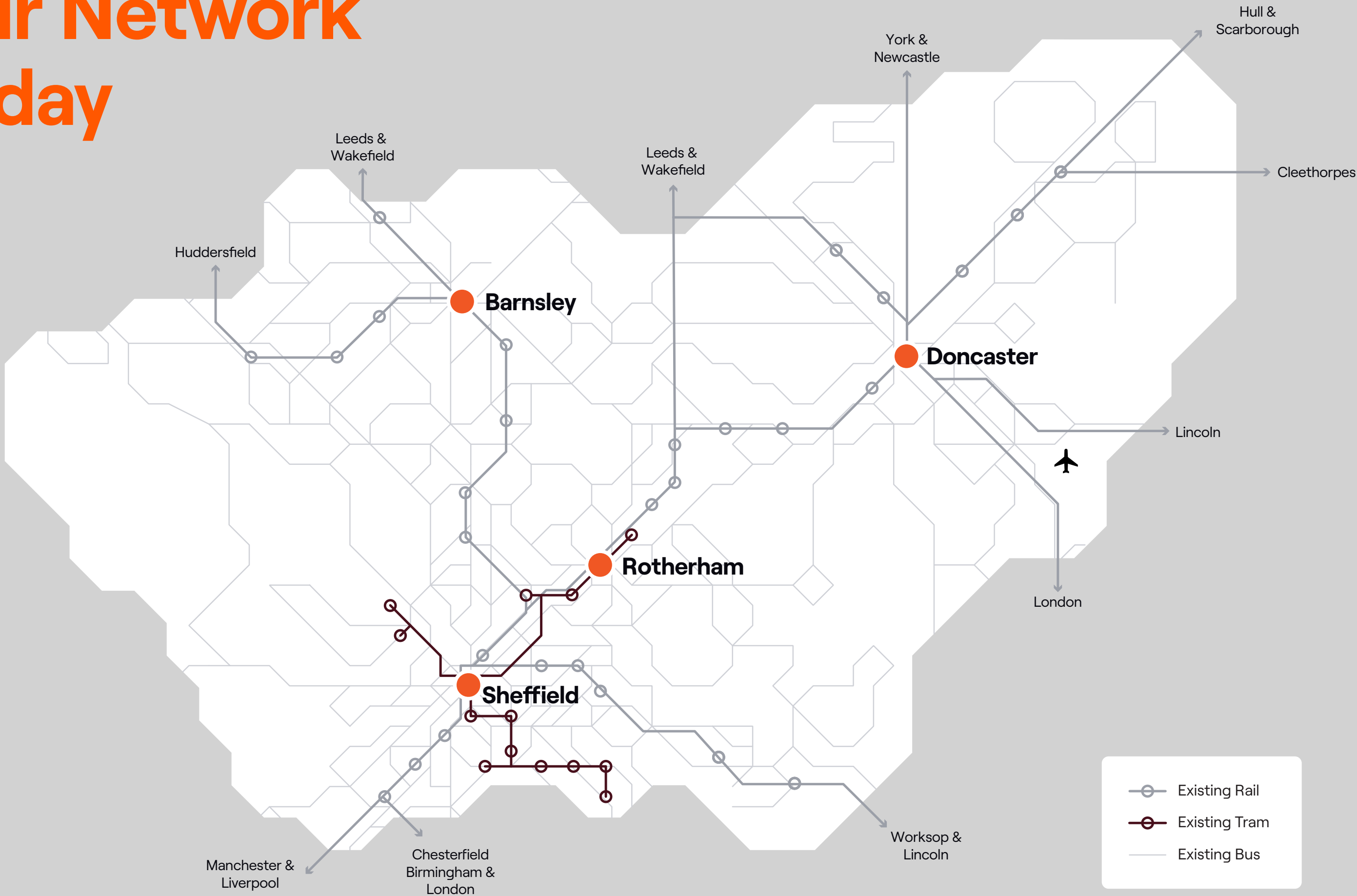
We know that our communities have different needs. That's why we'll work with everyone to understand what matters most and shape transport options that really work for us all.

Our existing transport network needs to work better for all of us. Taking control of the bus and tram networks means we have the power to enhance, expand and better manage our networks.

This is the People's Transport Network. Built around our everyday lives. Built for South Yorkshire.



Our Network Today



Delivering a Network Fit for the Future: 5 Big Changes

1

Buses

Buses will be brought under public control. Every pound will be reinvested in making the network work. Under 18's will travel for free. We will redesign and restore bus routes across South Yorkshire.

2

Supertram

South Yorkshire's Supertram will get the investment it needs, securing the fast, reliable, high-capacity network we need. We will get a new fleet of trams and extend the network even further.

3

Northern Powerhouse Rail

We'll deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail and the White Rose Yorkshire's Plan for Rail, meaning more frequent, more reliable rail connections across the North and to London, upgraded stations and new trains.

4

Safe neighbourhoods

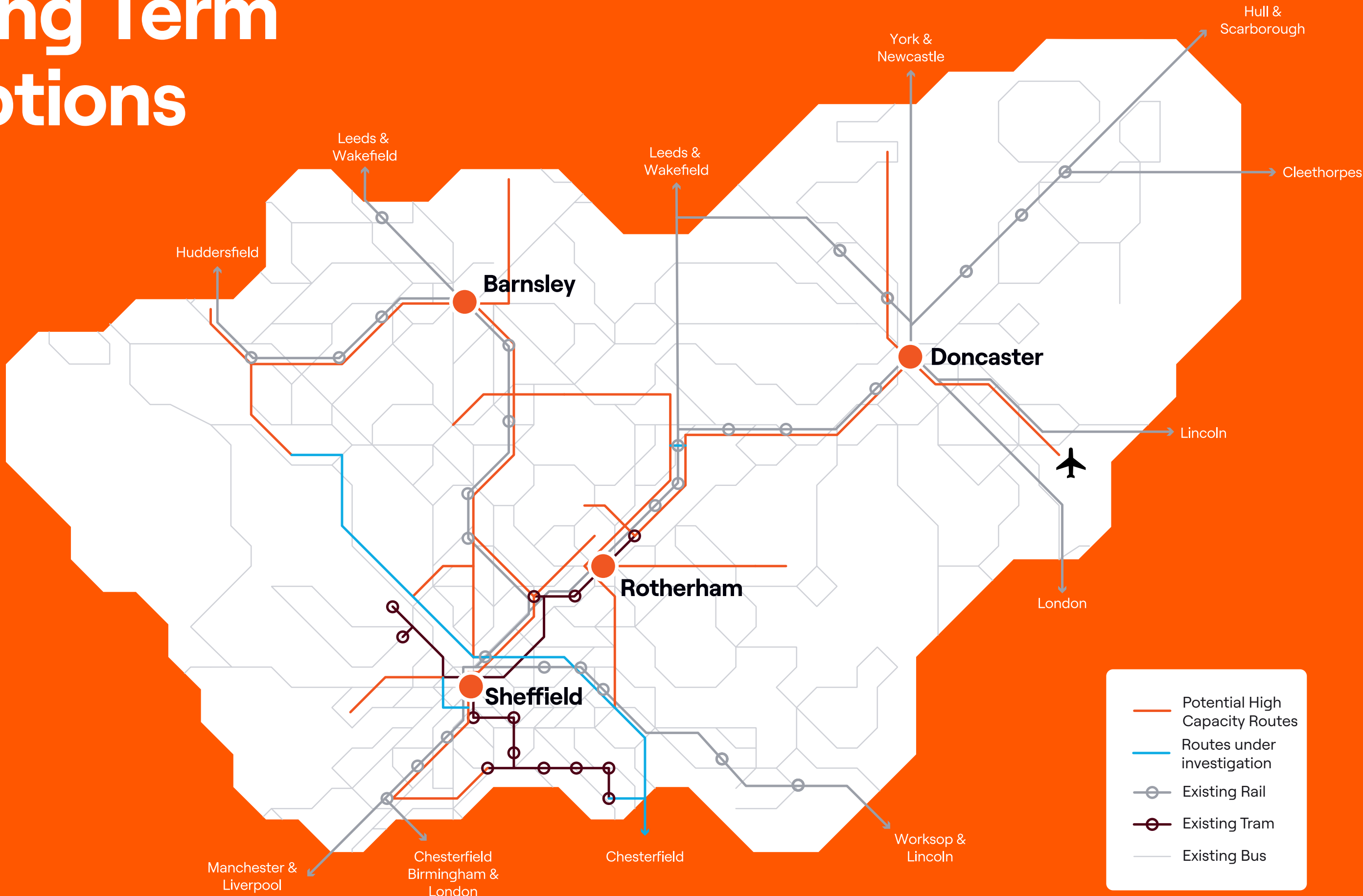
We'll invest in safer neighbourhoods that make walking, wheeling and cycling a real option, giving everyone freedom and choice about how they travel and move, with a particular focus on children and young people.

5

Airport

We'll reopen our airport and connect it to the rest of the region and beyond, with new, improved transport connections. Passenger flights will begin by 2028, connecting South Yorkshire to the world.

Long Term Options



The Future of South Yorkshire People's Network

Buses

This is the biggest change to
South Yorkshire's buses in decades.

In March 2025, we made a landmark decision to franchise our bus network. It came after one of the biggest consultations the region has ever seen. Between 2027 and 2029, we'll bring our buses back under public control. That means:

- All of us will be able to have a say on how the buses should run. This gives us the power to decide where and when our services go.
- Our bus services will work for us, not shareholders.
- We can choose the types of buses, set the fares and ticket options, to make sure they're reliable and easy to use.

It's vital that all of us in South Yorkshire can get where we need to go. Our buses need to work for us, and together, we'll make sure they do.





What's Changing?

We know our buses aren't working well enough for everyone right now, so we're taking practical steps to build a network that works for all of South Yorkshire. Here's what's changing:

Fair fares

We'll keep fares as low as we can, for as long as we can. Every penny gets reinvested into building a better People's Network, so improvements benefit local people, not shareholders.

New electric buses

From autumn 2027, electric buses will start to replace older diesel vehicles, helping cut emissions and improve air quality. Over 30% of new buses will be electric on day one of franchising.

Free travel for under 18s

The pilot scheme is already underway in Barnsley, and we're working to expand it right across South Yorkshire, making it easier for young people to get around.

Better routes and connections

We're reviewing the whole network, introducing new services so journeys are easier, quicker, and better joined-up.

Smarter use of data

By understanding exactly where buses get delayed, we can make targeted changes that keep them moving and improve reliability.

Simple tickets

Introducing tickets that work on buses, trains, and trams, travel will be smoother, with fewer barriers. Fares will be simplified to make travelling for less, easier.

Uniformed officers

In partnership with South Yorkshire Police, we'll have visible, uniformed teams helping to keep everyone safe.

New and improved shelters

Cleaner, more comfortable, more welcoming shelters will make waiting for your bus a better experience.

Clear customer commitments

We'll have a single, consistent point of contact so you always know what to expect, who's responsible, and where to go if something doesn't go to plan.

We'll keep listening

Improving our bus services will take time, but we're committed to making things better now, and keeping that progress going in the future.

Trams

South Yorkshire's Supertram is an iconic part of our transport network. The tram offers fast, reliable travel to busy destinations for an effortless, connected journey.

Last year over nine million people used the Supertram network in South Yorkshire, and over the next few years, we're planning to invest over £600 million to keep our plans on track. But we want more.

In 2024 we took back public control of our tram and have big ambitions to grow the service in the future. This is what to expect:

Bigger network with new routes, new stops and new extensions including a new stop at Magna opening Summer 2026!

Simple tickets and affordable fares that make it easier to travel across the People's Network.

Better timetables to make switching between tram and bus easier.

More Park & Ride to help people make shorter car journeys and cut congestion on our roads.

New and improved shelters that are easy to find, safe to reach with accessible crossings and comfortable to use providing seating and secure cycle storage in busy locations.

Our tram system will keep improving so everyone can travel in a way that suits them. Dogs are now welcome on our trams, opening up travel for even more people. In the future we will ask how allowing bikes on our trams could improve journeys for even more of us.



Repair, Renew and Improve

We want our trams to keep serving our communities for many years, but the system is ageing.

The Supertram opened over 30 years ago and has carried almost 340 million people in that time. That's a lot of journeys, and it's taken its toll. We've got £630m to upgrade our tram system. Here's what we're doing:

Renewing tracks and signals

Making sure the Supertram keeps running safely and reliably for years to come.

New trams

With more space on board, air conditioning, and charging points so journeys are more comfortable.

Upgrading tram stops

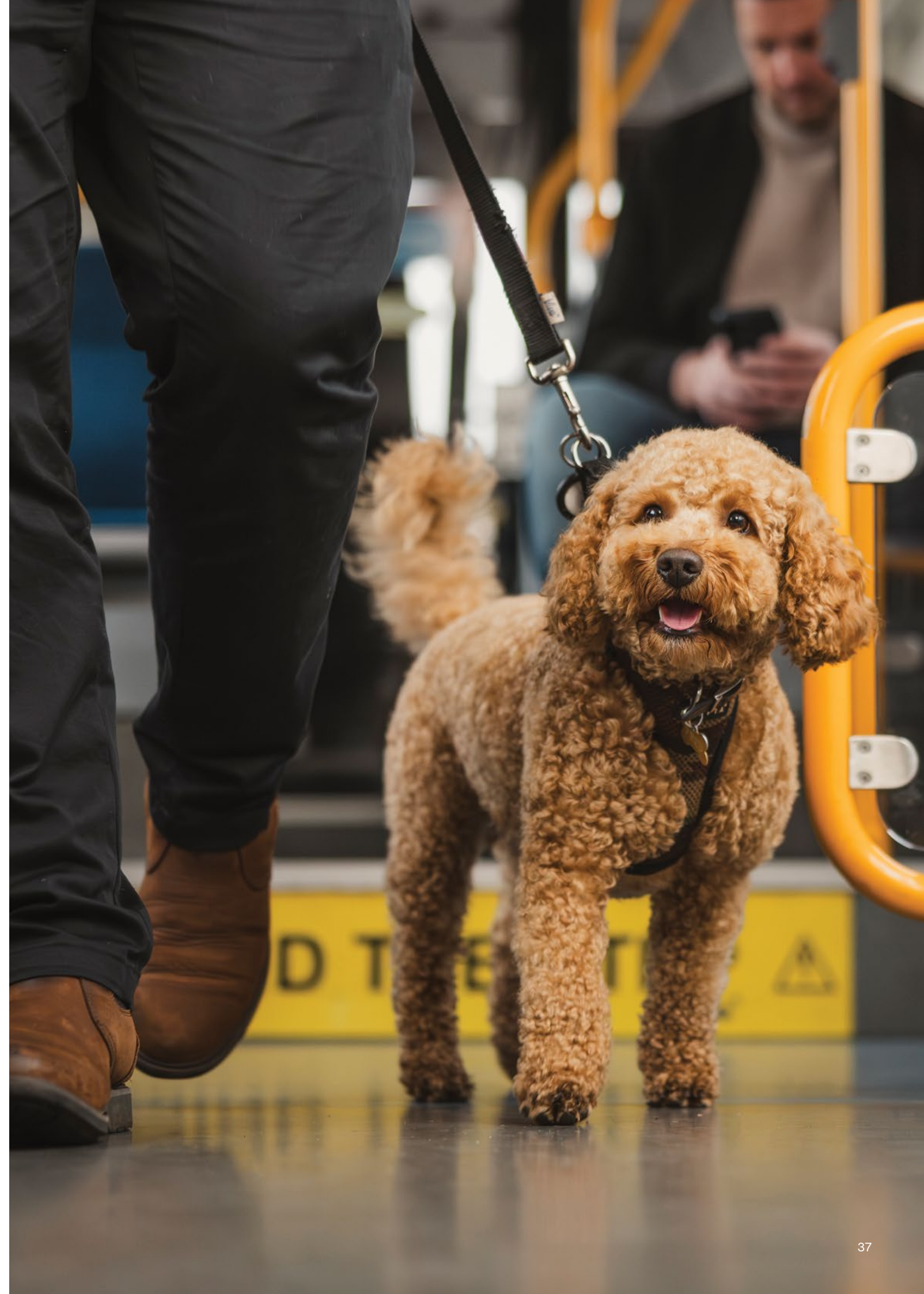
New shelters and seating to make waiting for the tram comfortable and more enjoyable.

Smoother journeys across the region

Linking trams with buses, bikes and trains so people have more choice and seamless travel.

Growing the network

We'll grow the tram network so more people can reach jobs, education and services, strengthening our communities and economy, by exploring new frequencies, routes and stops in areas that need better public transport links.



We want rail services that run on time, use newer trains and reach more destinations. But a fragmented, outdated system where decisions are made in London – not here – is holding us back. It's time for change.

Trains

Rail is an efficient way to move people and goods quickly, connecting key places and driving the economy. But in South Yorkshire, congestion at major stations and limited investment is causing delays and stopping new services from connecting us to the rest of the UK.

That’s why, working with West Yorkshire and York and North Yorkshire, we set out our plans to improve rail services in our region in the White Rose Yorkshire Plan for Rail. A new public body, Great British Railways (GBR), will take charge of fares, timetables, and infrastructure, giving us more say over local rail services. We want more local powers and will work with GBR to make that happen. Here’s what we want to do:

Transformed Sheffield Midland Station

Increase capacity so new services can run and delays are reduced, better station facilities and regenerating the area around the station.

New Rotherham Gateway Station

To connect Rotherham to mainline train services, reducing the journey time to Leeds by 30 mins, unlocking new jobs and homes.

Upgraded Doncaster Station

For more frequent and reliable services across South Yorkshire and beyond to keep passengers and freight moving.

More connections to neighbouring cities

Faster, easier journeys from Sheffield to Leeds, York, Manchester and beyond for work or leisure.

Electrify our network

Cleaner, greener, and more reliable trains to and from Sheffield and beyond on the Midland Mainline and other key routes serving the region.

Better stations across the region

Looking at reopening Sheffield Victoria Station and creating better links from Barnsley including a direct service to London.

Seamless connections

Ensuring that journeys by rail are designed to connect and integrate with tram and bus timetables and high quality walking and cycling routes.

Faster journeys, better connections

This year the Government agreed to back Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), delivering major upgrades at Sheffield station, a new station at Rotherham and investment in the tram-train system. This represents real progress bringing faster links from Sheffield to Leeds, Manchester and across the North. The first phase of NPR will deliver our ambition for four fast trains per hour between Sheffield and Leeds with significant improvements, at Sheffield Midland Station to improve journeys to more places.

That means quicker journeys and better connections – providing a real opportunity to stay near and go far. Local and regional rail connections need a boost too, so people, goods, and services keep moving across South Yorkshire.

More trains, more destinations

- More connections to Yorkshire and the Midlands to make regional travel easier.
- Extra services to Manchester and a direct train to the airport.
- Better links between Doncaster and West Yorkshire.
- Penistone Line upgrade with faster trains and double the frequency.
- Exploring more routes to key destinations, including Barnsley to London.
- Developing plans for better connections to Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

New and improved stations

- Waverley station: serving the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District development, nearby homes, and supporting growth in the area
- All rail stations step-free by 2040
- More Park & Ride spaces at busy stations and improved walking and cycling connections

Modern Journeys for a Modern Network

Operated with new, modern electric-hybrid trains on Sheffield to London routes from 2026. New trains with more seats on Sheffield to Leeds and other routes from 2030, making journeys more comfortable and reliable.



Active Journeys, Healthier Lives

The ambition is clear, we want South Yorkshire to be the best place for kids to walk, wheel and cycle. This will mean:

Investing in safer neighbourhoods

Creating places across South Yorkshire where kids can scoot to the park, learn to ride a bike, or walk to school safely.

New and improved road crossings

Giving pedestrians priority and stopping people from parking on pavements so it's easier for everyone to get around.

Working with schools

To help thousands more children and families travel to school differently, without needing to rely on a car.

Putting people first

Designing improvements in local neighbourhoods and projects around people's needs, to get more people walking, wheeling, and cycling.

High quality design

Everything we design, pavements, crossings, and bike lanes, will be high quality and usable by everyone.

Stop pavement parking

We'll ask the government to back us with ambitious policies on stopping pavement parking, use Zebra crossings, and design standards so South Yorkshire streets are safer and easier to use.





Routes to Opportunities

Our roads and highways should help create vibrant, healthy communities.

Investment in Routes to Opportunities
Will create stronger links to work, learning, and services across the region.

Getting to buses, trams, and trains
Should be safer and easier because every journey starts at your front door. Whether that's by walking, wheeling with wheelchairs or using mobility aids.

Secure bike parking
To make it easier to cycle to a train station or tram stop, giving more choice about how to travel to work or education.

Bikes on trams
Carrying bikes on our new trams will better connect our network and help more of us travel to new places by bike.

E-bike rental scheme
A new e-bike rental scheme is coming to South Yorkshire, to help everyone go the distance and conquer the hills and highways of South Yorkshire. And in partnership with Sheffield City Council, we'll introduce a city e-bike hire scheme to get around town quickly and easily.

Safer Roads for Everyone

Our vision is simple but bold. No one should be killed or seriously injured on South Yorkshire's roads. We call this Vision Zero and we're committed to doing everything possible to make it happen.

In 2024 41 people died on our roads and 750 were seriously injured. We will take action to keep people safer on our roads.

Our plan

The Safer Roads Strategic Action Plan will be designed around the Safe Systems approach and set clear priorities and actions to keep us safe on our roads.

Our focus will be on people most vulnerable to injury including those walking, wheeling, cycling, or on motorbikes.

Our roads & roadsides will be engineered to be as safe as possible along with our roadsides to make them safer, including improved speed management across the region.

Our campaigns will target dangerous behaviours including speeding, drink and drug driving, phone use while driving and not wearing seatbelts. We'll also work with the Government to implement their ambitious new Road Safety Strategy to make our roads safer for everyone.





Stay Near, Go Far: Keeping the People's Network Moving

For many of us, driving can feel like the only option but more car trips leads to growing congestion, which makes journeys less reliable whether we travel by car or bus, impacting businesses and our economy.

By improving how we use our roads, we can make everyday journeys smoother, support businesses and growth, protect our environment, reduce carbon emissions and ensure the People's Network keeps moving.

Fixing roads for a safer, smoother network

We'll fix potholes and maintain our roads to keep them safe and reliable for everyone, for years to come.

Making our roads work for everyone

We're redesigning our roads for growth. Less traffic on our roads will make it easy and safe to travel whether by public transport, walking, cycling, or driving.

Cleaner vehicles

We'll invest in public EV charging to give people greater confidence to choose an EV vehicle, even when they don't have a driveway at home.

Supporting new homes and jobs

We'll invest in improvements that enable new homes to be built and businesses to grow, making sure our network can support a thriving region.

Keeping people moving

We'll improve how traffic is managed to cut delays, reduce disruption, and make everyday journeys smoother and more dependable.

Improving access to Doncaster Sheffield Airport

Last year we took the historic decision to reopen the airport as our gateway to the world. This decision will see a world leading sustainable aviation and advanced manufacturing hub created Gateway East in Doncaster.

Reopening the airport is about more than flights, it's about creating a modern hub that boosts jobs, investment and growth across the region.

The airport and Gateway East development offer a big opportunity, with 1,200 new homes and more than 4,000 new jobs, but good, easy access is essential for success.

That means making improvements now and, in the future, so more people can reach the airport in different ways.

Upgrading M18 Junction 3 and improving parking with EV chargers will help open the site for growth and make journeys more reliable for everyone.

Designing bus routes and safe walking and cycling links, that connect our transport hubs and nearby communities, offering more ways to travel to local opportunities.

Developing plans for a future rail station or tram connection to make the airport easier to reach, cut traffic and emissions. Strengthening the area's position for both passenger flights and freight, fully linking it into the wider Gateway East development.



Vision Timeline



Delivering this vision will take time, investment, and teamwork. We're committed to working with partners across the region to turn it into reality.

This vision will guide how we invest in our transport network in the years ahead. It will shape our long term plans and how we run and improve services. Our Local Transport Plan will build on this vision, setting out how we'll deliver our ambitions and the detail behind them. And there will be more chances to get involved to shape our plans. People are at the heart of our transport network. The People's Network.

The People's Network

