



<b>Report to:</b>	Transport Committee
<b>Date:</b>	13 March 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Update</b>
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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

## 1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Transport Committee on revisions to the Combined Authority's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for 2024, in line with the Department for Transport's (DfT) requirements and to seek approval of the approach to updating the document.

## 2. Information

### Background

- 2.1 In October 2021, the Combined Authority published its [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) in response to the DfT's National Bus Strategy. The BSIP sets out a strategic vision and delivery priorities to transform the West Yorkshire bus system, including the ambition for a 'a radically enhanced, fully inclusive and more cohesive bus and public transport network which takes people where they need to go, when they need to go, and caters for the complexity of modern travel patterns'.
- 2.2 Since its publication, the bus industry has faced significant challenges including on-going suppressed patronage as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, cost inflation (both to operate services and, more generally, rising living costs impacting passengers spending power), driver shortages and resultant commercial service withdrawals.

- 2.3 In April 2022, the Combined Authority was notified by the DfT that it had been awarded £69,974,070 in revenue funding, over three financial years, to support delivery of its BSIP. In 2023 a further £7.75m of BSIP+ funding was provided to West Yorkshire to support services that were being curtailed by operators.
- 2.4 Additionally, a further £13.3m of BSIP funding from Network North (BSIP Phase 3) has been nominally added to the programme, subject to approval of the updated BSIP in June this year.
- 2.5 As of February 2024, £29,956,507 of the BSIP Programme (BSIP and BSIP+) funding has been spent. In total, approximately 43% of the overall BSIP and BSIP+ programme budget has been committed to be spent by the end of March 2024.
- 2.6 Although this award is one of the highest received by any local authority in England, it still falls significantly short of the BSIP's original associated funding ask of £399,622,000 (£168,780,000 revenue and £230,842,000 capital) over five financial years.
- 2.7 Initially it was required that an update to the BSIP was undertaken on an annual basis, and so a revised document was re-published in October 2022. However, in Summer 2023, the requirement for a 2023 BSIP update was suspended by the DfT, pending revised guidance on its content.

### **BSIP Guidance 2024**

- 2.8 On 16 January 2024, DfT released their updated guidance for BSIP 2024, with overarching themes highlighted as follows:
- **Updating the baseline to 2023/24:** updating the 2021 BSIP's account of the current situation to reflect all developments since 2021, including evolution of the local bus market post-pandemic and its issues and opportunities; highlighting achievements made since 2021 in progress with the delivery of locally driven change
  - **Setting out the improvement programme in financial year 2024/25:** reflecting the known funding envelope of all three phases of BSIP funding and all other funding sources for BSIP delivery, including the Local Transport Authority's (LTA's) own resources.
  - **Getting ready for 2025 and beyond:** refreshing the plan's ambition and content to set out a high quality and flexible pipeline of prioritised proposals for the four years 2025/26 to 2028/29, nested within the BSIP's overall 10 years plus vision, attractive to funders, and ready for delivery as opportunities for funding arise.



2.9 There are also new requirements highlighted, including:

- **Bus Connectivity Assessments (BCA)** – to be completed on annual basis, with the first assessment undertaken in Spring 2024. At a high-level this will identify the ‘best’ bus network to meet bus connectivity objectives at varying levels of funding support. More detailed guidance is expected in due course;
- **Bus Industry Capacity and Capability** – an outline of an approach to co-operating with bus operators, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and job centres to address bus driver and other key staff and skills shortages, including vacancy rates at depots; and
- **Monitoring and Evaluation** – new public annual monitoring report against BSIP targets (integrated with the BCA), replacing six monthly reporting.

2.10 Every LTA is required to produce a 2024 BSIP by **12 June 2024** to secure the release of its BSIP funding for 2024/25, which includes the recently announced BSIP Phase 3 funding. Whilst it is not a bidding document, it may be used as a factor by Government to determine future levels of funding, such as the Summer 2024 spending review.

2.11 A further BSIP update is likely to be required in 2025 and subsequently on a less than annual basis responding to need.

### **Proposed Approach**

2.12 The West Yorkshire BSIP currently sets out a plan of interventions across five key delivery areas, which work towards:

- **An enhanced, fully inclusive and more cohesive bus network** – which takes people where they need to go, when they need to go, and making improvements to our network which aim to reduce social isolation and enable better access to jobs, housing and employment, especially those not in our main town and city centres.
- **Clear and simple fares** – to make paying for bus travel more affordable, easier, convenient and flexible so that passengers are charged the best price for their journeys and within an affordable range, improving satisfaction with value for money.
- **Improved, more inclusive customer service and support** – so passengers have the tools to travel with confidence and help they need if their journey does not go to plan with more journey information available digitally as well as at bus stops, and improving satisfaction with our service provision by ensuring the highest quality customer service is always provided to passengers.



- **Priority for buses on our road** – so journeys by bus are quicker, with less time spent stuck in traffic, and are a viable alternative to the private car through delivery of more bus priority that is consistent and enforced effectively as well as improving management of our roads and streets to improve punctuality and reliability of bus journeys.
- **More green and better vehicles** – to improve the onboard experience and make bus the sustainable choice for travel in West Yorkshire through commitments to all vehicles becoming Euro VI emission standard or better and ultimately a carbon zero bus fleet.

- 2.13 It is proposed that these existing themes as well as the structure within the BSIP, which is centred around the passenger journey and how they will benefit from improvements at each stage, continue to be utilised and built upon, with policy positions further developed and delivery proposals identified for each key delivery area. This will be informed by lessons learnt from the last few years as travel patterns have recovered post-pandemic as well as the bus reform case for change, which was developed post publication of the BSIP in 2021.
- 2.14 A thematic area that will be more greatly emphasised in the 2024 BSIP is **bus stations, bus stops and public space** and the critical role they play in providing informative, accessible and safe environments for passengers as they wait for their bus. The principles identified through this area will help to inform successful delivery of capital infrastructure projects within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and Levelling Up Fund (LUF) programmes.
- 2.15 The 2024 BSIP will also reflect on our successes from the previous three years, highlighting initiatives such as Mayor's Fares, Superbus and the Safer Travel Partnership, as well as consider learning from public engagement undertaken through the Mayor's Big Bus Chat.
- 2.16 It is not intended that any new public consultation will take place to inform the revised BSIP. However, various research and survey work has been completed in recent months, such as the Mayor's Fares survey, which can be referenced to highlight public perceptions of bus service and provision and provide insight into potential policy development.
- 2.17 Additional elements that will have to be considered when updating the BSIP are:
- the role of the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance and how the Combined Authority should engage with bus operators and District Council partners during development of the update; and any impacts on the Enhanced Partnership Plan which reflects the ambitions of the original BSIP.
  - link to bus reform - the existing BSIP formed an important component of the Assessment and its strategic Case for Change. A Mayoral decision on whether to

proceed with the Proposed Franchising Scheme would impact what and how improvements could be achieved in the future.

- ensuring alignment of objectives and strategic priorities with the emerging Local Transport Plan (LTP) and whether its relevant workstreams can be accelerated to support the updated BSIP.

### **Next Steps**

- 2.18 The Combined Authority will convene an internal cross-directorate steering group to oversee revising the BSIP, with the intention of providing further update on policy development and seek indicative approval of the updated document at the Transport Committee scheduled for 26 May 2024.

### **Passenger Charter**

- 2.19 On 10 March 2023, the implementation of a Passenger Charter for West Yorkshire bus services was approved by Transport Committee.
- 2.20 The provision of a Passenger Charter is a requirement of BSIP funding and work was undertaken through a collaborative effort of the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance with a commitment to review the Charter on an annual basis.
- 2.21 The Charter was informed by the Mayor's Big Bus Chat which was conducted between July and September 2022 to engage the public on the content of the BSIP, as well as gauging their current attitudes towards bus travel more generally.
- 2.22 The Mayor's Big Bus Chat identified that passengers seek consistent standards of passenger services across the bus network, and therefore the Charter sets out:
- What the Passenger can expect from bus services in terms of on buses, at bus stops and stations, reliability of service and passenger information.
  - How the bus service will support equality, diversity and inclusion.
  - What the service operator will guarantee.
  - How to make comments and complaints.
- 2.23 To support the monitoring and performance of the Charter, some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were agreed:
- Percent of homes within 400m of a Core Network bus stop.
  - Customer satisfaction levels with bus services.
  - Number of bus-related complaints registered with the CA and the operators.
  - Number of free travel vouchers issued by bus operators.
  - Number and/or percent of bus stops with up-to-date printed timetable / QR code link to timetable.

- Percent of bus journeys running on time (+1 min/-5 min at intermediate stops).
- Percent of bus journeys cancelled.
- Awareness of particular information sources.
- Satisfaction with particular information sources.
- Perceived safety levels on buses and in bus stations.

2.24 Most of the KPIs are tracked through the annual Public Perceptions of Transport survey conducted by the Combined Authority. After an analysis of the first year's data has been conducted, a report evidencing performance against the KPIs will be published in spring 2024. The report will incorporate data from the Transport Focus customer survey commissioned by the Combined Authority.

### **3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications**

3.1 A key aim of the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan is to support the decarbonisation of the local bus network, including delivery of a carbon zero bus fleet by 2036, as well as encourage more travel by bus and other sustainable modes in order to tackle the climate emergency.

### **4. Inclusive Growth Implications**

4.1 The key aims of the West Yorkshire BSIP are to create a more inclusive, accessible bus service and to better connect communities, particularly those areas of high deprivation, in order to support the region's inclusive growth ambitions.

### **5. Equality and Diversity Implications**

5.1 Supporting equality and diversity through ensuring the bus service is attractive, inclusive and accessible for all is a key aim of the West Yorkshire BSIP.

5.2 The planned public engagement will also prioritise engaging with seldom heard groups and, where possible, obtaining data on protected characteristics from participants, in order to strengthen the insights, it provides to support equality and diversity.

5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and will be reviewed regularly throughout the programme's delivery.

### **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. However, it should be noted that subject to the submission of an updated BSIP, the Combined Authority will receive its 2024/25 funding allocation of £13.3m.

### **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.



## **8. Staffing Implications**

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report. The BSIP award included a limited increase in staff resource to enable the management and delivery of the programme.

## **9. External Consultees**

- 9.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 That the Committee note the requirements to update the BSIP.
- 10.2 That the Committee endorse the revision of the 2024 BSIP in line with the proposed approach that has been outlined, including the intention to seek indicative approval of the updated document at the 26 May 2024 Transport Committee.

## **11. Background Documents**

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

## **12. Appendices**

None.