

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: Friday 17th September 2021

Subject: **Bus Service Improvement Plan**

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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 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 type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update Transport Committee members on the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and provide an overview of key content to be included in the final document.

2. Information

Bus Service Improvement Plan overview

Context within wider bus reform

- 2.1 The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is due for submission to Government by 31 October 2021.
- 2.2 The BSIP must provide an overview of the Combined Authority's ambition for better buses across West Yorkshire and how they plan to achieve the overarching goal of the National Bus Strategy – to rebuild and grow bus patronage and buses' modal share.

- 2.3 Guidance from the Department for Transport suggests because BSIPs have had to be produced within six months, ‘they will necessarily be outlines. We do not expect vastly detailed and granular documents running to hundreds of pages. Nor will we take them as definitive or immutable commitments or statements of intent on your part. Their main purpose is to get everyone thinking about what questions need to be addressed in the area, to explore possible answers, and to provide an early basis for funding decisions in the autumn and winter in preparation for the financial year 2022/3 when transformational funding begins’. Transport Minister Baroness Vere wrote to LTA Leaders on 7 September encouraging BSIPs to provide “transformational changes” to bus services (**Appendix 1**)
- 2.4 The BSIP will be the basis of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme(s) which will outline in further detail the approach to delivering the BSIP’s ambition, in partnership with operators. This is due for publication as DRAFT at the end of 2021, allowing time for an operator objection period and public consultation before being agreed and operational by April 2022, as per the DfT’s deadline.
- 2.5 Furthermore, the assessment of a Franchising Scheme will provide additional scope for development of the Combined Authority’s vision for buses in West Yorkshire, and to understand how far the current offer aligns or falls short of this.

Vision and Objectives

- 2.6 The following are the BSIP’s vision and objectives as approved by the Transport Committee in June 2021.
- 2.7 To deliver the Bus Strategy vision, the Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to:
- Contribute to improved economic productivity in West Yorkshire.
 - Provide cleaner, greener buses supporting sustainable travel and contributing to the environmental targets of West Yorkshire.
 - Support inclusive growth and social well-being ambitions of West Yorkshire.
- 2.8 To achieve this the Bus Service Improvement Plan requires a set of objectives for delivery - these are to:
- Establish bus as a key mode of choice for travel in West Yorkshire.
 - Establish a financially sustainable bus service.
 - Improve operational delivery to provide the passenger with a service they can feel confident in using.
 - Improve connectivity for communities facing deprivation, inequality, and exclusion.
 - Ensure the bus service is integrated to deliver sustainable connectivity.

Content Overview

2.9 The strategy and content for inclusion in the BSIP is being developed through analysis of passenger insight, internal workshops and engagement with stakeholders, including District partners and bus operators.

2.10 The below table provides an overview of the current position, under our six key BSIP workstreams (and an additional 'Other' section for miscellaneous issues).

Workstream	Key content
<u>Fares and ticketing</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to understand fares offering better value for money and convenient payment systems • Phased approach to enabling a day and weekly maximum 'capped' fare using contactless technology • Developing app-based barcode ticketing including a trial of a ticket buying travel time rather than distance. • Adapting concessionary fare schemes to ensure they support inclusion and encourage young people to travel more by bus.
<u>Customer Service and Information</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Passenger Charter' and customer guarantees – setting standards that should be expected on all buses, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'No quibble' money back guarantee if unhappy with the service ○ Last journey promise • Better coordination of customer complaints and queries across all operators – with new service level agreements and processes so customers get a timely response no matter who they ask. • Improved consistency and more shared training for customer-facing staff (driver & bus station) across Alliance partners – and a joint mystery shopper programme to highlight issues and reward good customer service. • Enhance online journey planners to enable ticket purchase and real time disruption information. • More consistent audio-visual information (including vehicle retrofitting) and other accessibility support. • Expansion of the CA's role over management of network disruption messaging.
<u>Communications and marketing</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Metro brand will unify the West Yorkshire <u>bus network</u> and signifying the standard of service passengers should expect. To be implemented consistently, alongside service and area branding, across customer-facing channels including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tickets and apps ○ Bus stop displays and in stations ○ On board vehicles

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Websites and social media ○ Joint marketing campaigns and shared key messaging across all operators. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour change activity plan – to encourage bus travel as sustainable option and choice for life.
<u>Air Quality and Decarbonisation</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain commitments to all buses being EUROVI or alternative by 2026 transition to a fully zero-emission bus fleet by 2036 (as part of wider ambition for the region to be a net-zero carbon economy by 2038) • Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) scheme bid – for 121 new vehicles to deployed and operational across the region by 2024. • Update and maintain the ZERO emissions roadmap for bus
<u>Network Design</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 year network plan – evolution of the existing offer to deliver improved consistency, connectivity and convenience for the passenger. • Expand and enhance the Core Network : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expanded routes, increased frequency and faster services. ○ ‘Turn up and go’ on major routes. ○ Extended service hours – morning and evening services. ○ Improved modal interchange. • Improve consistency of the Secondary and Community networks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved minimum service levels. ○ Better regularity of services. • Use of FlexiBus (Demand Responsive Transport) where appropriate - using outcomes from East Leeds. • Superbus - locality based pilots of enhanced services and local fare discounts linked to measures to promote bus use to local facilities.
<u>Bus priority and highway infrastructure</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region-wide approach to improving bus journey times and reliability • Costed and prioritised pipeline of highway infrastructure schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To include bus lanes, bus gates, traffic signal priority and improved kerb space and access.
<u>Other</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to improve the safety and security of bus passengers

2.11 The proposed customer service offer will be summarised in a ‘Passenger Charter’ which will set of the standards of services and guarantees all passenger should expect when travelling on any bus in the region.

- 2.12 Key themes running out through the document are ‘**Improving Community Connectivity**’; ‘**Multimodal Integration and Sustainable Travel**’; and ‘**Equality Inclusion and Diversity**’. Each theme will have also have a specific chapter, setting out how we are seeking to address it
- 2.13 To highlight the Combined Authority as a viable partner for significant investment, case studies of existing best practice and innovation will also be included throughout the BSIP document. including:
- Network Navigation
 - Fare deal for under 19s.
 - Journey planner and use of open data
 - Real-time information
 - MCard ticketing scheme
 - East Leeds Demand Responsive Transport pilot
 - Park and Ride

Bus priority and highway Infrastructure pipeline

- 2.14 As part of the BSIP, the Combined Authority is working with District partners to develop a consistent, pan-regional approach to delivery and enforcement of bus priority – a key requirement of the National Bus Strategy. Also supporting pipeline of highway infrastructure schemes is also being developed, which will be costed and included as part of the BSIP funding bid.
- 2.15 Suggestions for bus priority schemes are being derived from the Strategic Bus Network Review (part of the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan) and suggestions provide by both operators and districts.
- 2.16 It is proposed the case for schemes will be evidence and ran through a prioritisation framework which will consider factors including deliverability, cost, improvements to journey times and delays, environmental impacts, safety, and any impacts on Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

Engagement overview

- 2.17 Extensive engagement with District officers and bus operators has taken place to support development of the BSIP proposals.
- 2.18 Additionally, the BSIP has been / is due to be consulted on at meetings including:
- Transport Committee Working Group (2nd August)
 - Joint District Consultation Subcommittee (26th August)
 - Bus Expert Panel (31st August)
 - Mayoral roundtable with bus user groups and other stakeholders (September 14th)
- 2.19 The BSIP is also building on extensive passenger insight gained through public consultations on the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy and Bus Strategy (2017) and Connectivity Infrastructure Plan (2021), as well as

ongoing work conducted by WYCA's Research and Intelligence department and the watchdog Transport Focus.

BSIP approval process

- 2.20 The BSIP document is currently being drafted taking into account comments made at this meeting and from the engagement described in 2.18. DfT guidance requires that the BSIP is supported by local bus operators, it is planned to obtain this support through the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance in September. The Plan will be presented to the Combined Authority meeting on 20 October who will be recommended to delegate the Managing Director to finalise, approve and submit the Bus Services Improvement Plan to the Department for Transport.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 A well used and attractive bus service will support the shift in travel from private cars to more sustainable modes needed to reduce carbon emissions from transport. The Bus Service Improvement Plan will set out a roadmap towards a zero carbon bus fleet ahead of the Combined Authority's net zero target of 2038.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 Buses are important provide and enable access to employment and training opportunities across West Yorkshire. The 5 year network plan will consider the needs of communities with higher levels of deprivation. The fares and ticketing workstream will consider the needs of less affluent passengers

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 The Bus Service Improvement Plan will seek to identify options which make travel by bus an attractive and viable option for all members of the community. The Passenger Charter will consider the needs of all prospective bus users and will identify actions to promote inclusion. An equality impact assessment will be made on the finalised Plan

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. At the time of writing, BSIP funding guidance was awaited from the Department for Transport. It is expected to include revenue funded elements. Government has indicated that capital elements would be funded from City Region Transport Settlement which is the subject of a separate report on this committee.

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.

9. External Consultees

9.1 This report has been prepared in consultation with bus operators and local Council officers.

10. Recommendations

10.1 That the Transport Committee endorses the progress made to date in developing a Bus Service Improvement Plan and provides any comments on the content of the Plan as set out in this report.

11. Background Documents

None.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Letter from Baroness Vere dated 7 September 2021