

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 22 October 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1: | 3 |
| 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 paper is to provide Combined Authority members with an overview of the content included in our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and request approval for its submission to the Department for Transport.

2 Information

WYCA's Bus Service Improvement Plan overview

Context within wider bus reform

- 2.1 As per the requirements of the National Bus Strategy, all local transport authorities (LTAs) must submit a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 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 the plan works to achieve the overarching goals of the National Bus Strategy – to rebuild and grow bus patronage and buses' modal share.

- 2.3 Transport Minister Baroness Vere wrote to LTA Leaders on 7 September encouraging BSIPs to provide “transformational changes” to bus services (**Appendix 2**). Guidance from the Department for Transport suggests that the main purpose of the BSIP 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’. The Guidance also recognises that 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.’
- 2.4 The BSIP will set out the Combined Authority’s ambition regardless of the delivery model needed to achieve this – i.e., an Enhanced Partnership or Franchising. However, the BSIP will set out a high level implementation plan for the schemes identified, with early deliverables to be included as part of the Enhanced Partnership. Longer term aspirations will be delivered through the bus reform process.
- 2.5 The Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme(s) which will outline in further detail the approach to delivering the BSIP’s ambition, in partnership with operators, 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 deadlines.
- 2.6 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

- 2.7 WYCA’s Bus Service Improvement Plan builds on the ambitions set out in the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy (2040), the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy (2017) and the West Yorkshire Connectivity Infrastructure Plan (2021) which put connectivity and sustainable travel at heart of a thriving and inclusive regional economy where everyone can build great businesses, careers and lives.
- 2.8 The BSIP’s vision and objectives were approved by Transport Committee in June 2021 and are as follows:

To support our vision for West Yorkshire, the Bus Service Improvement Plan must:

- Be gender neutral and free from any inherent bias.
- Support inclusive growth and social well-being ambitions of West Yorkshire.
- Contribute to improved economic productivity in West Yorkshire.
- Provide cleaner, greener buses supporting sustainable travel and contributing to the environmental targets of West Yorkshire.

- Be as competitive as possible against private car use in urban areas.
- 2.9 To achieve this, the objectives of the Bus Service Improvement Plan 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

- 2.10 The BSIP aims to present a bold plan which will deliver radical change to local buses, positioning them as an essential public service for all West Yorkshire's citizens, and one which is crucial to realising our wider ambitions for the region.
- 2.11 The strategy and initiatives included in the BSIP has been developed through analysis of passenger insight, internal workshops and engagement with stakeholders, including District partners and bus operators. It has also been driven by key Mayoral and other political priorities.
- 2.12 Supporting '**a safe and inclusive bus system**', '**better connected communities**' and '**decarbonisation and integrated sustainable travel**' are three key strategic themes that are worked in throughout all elements of the plan.
- 2.13 In summary, the initiatives included within the BSIP work to deliver:
- **A radically enhanced, gender neutral and more cohesive bus and wider 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.
 - **Clear and simple fares** - to make paying for bus travel more affordable, easier, convenient and flexible.
 - **Improved, more inclusive customer service and support** – so all passengers have the rights tools to travel with confidence and the help they need if their journey does not go to plan.
 - **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.
 - **More green and better vehicles** – to improve the onboard experience and make bus the sustainable choice for travel in West Yorkshire.
- 2.14 The draft Executive Summary of the Combined Authority's BSIP is included as (exempt) **appendix A** to this paper.
- 2.15 Table 1 provides a more detailed overview of specific initiatives included with the BSIP, under our six key internal workstreams areas (and an additional 'Other' section for miscellaneous issues).

Table 1 – BSIP key content

| Workstream | Key content |
|----------------------------|--|
| <u>Network Design</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replanning the bus network (especially where public money being spent) to ensure the travel needs of communities are being met. • 5 year network plan – evolution of the existing offer to deliver improved consistency, connectivity and convenience for the passenger, with core principles including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expanding the number of services and routes so that more people can access a bus that runs every 15 minutes or quicker. ○ Ensure buses running on our less frequent networks are more consistent and regular so they can still be relied upon for travel. ○ Ensure service frequencies extend throughout the day from early morning until evening and are designed to serve the particular needs of families with children, shift workers and those working in the night-time economy • Expand and enhance the Core Network, and improve consistency of the Secondary and Community (rural) networks. • Use of FlexiBus (Demand Responsive Transport) where appropriate - using outcomes from current East Leeds trial. • Superbus - locality based pilots of enhanced services and local fare discounts linked to measures to promote bus use to local facilities. |
| <u>Fares and ticketing</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to understand fares offering better value for money and convenient payment systems – including a reduction in the maximum price for a day’s bus travel in West Yorkshire • Introduction of multi-operator “tap and go” capping system by 2023 • Developing app-based barcode ticketing including a trial of a ticket buying travel time rather than distance. • A Mobility Credits scheme to provide travel tokens for those who need support accessing employment, training and education. • Adapting concessionary fare schemes to ensure they support inclusion and encourage young people to travel more by bus, as well as improved access to key facilities and amenities • Fare zone boundaries to meet actual travel demands rather than administrative boundaries. |

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| <p><u>Customer Service and Information</u></p> | <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. • Step change in provision of passenger information across bus network, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ‘next bus’ real time information screens at more bus stops ○ Audio passenger announcements and retrofitting audio visual information on buses ○ Facility to track bus through M Card mobile app will mean less waiting at stop • 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. • Expansion of the CA’s role over management of network disruption messaging’. |
| <p><u>Communications and marketing</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Metro brand will unify the West Yorkshire bus network 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 ○ Websites and social media • Joint marketing campaigns and shared key messaging across all operators • Behaviour change activity plan – to encourage bus travel as sustainable option and choice for life. |
| <p><u>Air Quality and Decarbonisation</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain commitments to all buses being EURO VI or alternative by 2026 and 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. • Replacement of our Access Bus Fleet with high quality, zero emission vehicles. • Update and maintain ZERO emissions roadmap |

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| <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"> • Multi-agency approach to addressing safety of customers especially women and girls, including infrastructure enhancements – such as CCTV and improved lighting at stops and stations – as well as new incident reporting tools and better promotion of the existing support available, such as information, to make people feel safer while they travel. • Targeted engagement with key customer groups including women and girls, young people, people with protected characteristics • Monitoring of passenger satisfaction (in total, and disaggregated, including by age and gender) |

2.16 The proposed customer service offer, as enabled by the BSIP, 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. A draft of this Charter will be included in the BSIP but will be further developed and formally agreed with operators as part of the Enhanced Partnership process.

2.17 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
- MCard ticketing scheme and app
- East Leeds Demand Responsive Transport pilot
- Transforming Cities Fund schemes

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

2.18 A number of KPIs have been developed to measure performance in delivery of the different themes within the BSIP. The primary KPIs identified are included in Table 2. A list of secondary KPIs has also been developed will be included as part of the final BSIP document. As per DfT guidance, the KPIs will be reported on a twice-yearly basis and there is an opportunity for making any revisions to the KPIs when the BSIP is updated each year.

Table 2 – West Yorkshire BSIP primary KPIs

| | Baseline | | Targets | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--|---|
| | Mar-19 | Mar-21 | 2025 | 2030 |
| Improved journey times | TBC | | 10% reduction in average journey time | 15% reduction in average journey time |
| Improved punctuality | TBC | | 95% | 99.5% |
| Improved reliability | 98.47% | 99.02% | 99.5% | 99.5% |
| Increased bus patronage | 11,001,345 | TBC | 2019 levels + 6% | 2019 levels + 16% |
| Increased customer satisfaction with local bus services (West Yorkshire RESIDENTS survey - Tracker) | 6.71 | 6.96 (Jan/Feb 21) | 8.5 | 9.5 |
| Increased bus passenger overall journey satisfaction (Transport Focus BUS USER survey) | 85% (2019) | N/A | 90% | 95% |
| Weekday mode share on radial routes into district centres moved from car to bus | Bus: 18%, Car 61% (2018/19) | N/A | Reduce car share by 2%, increase bus share by 5% | Reduce car share by 4%, increase bus share by 10% |
| Improved environmental performance and reduced carbon emissions of the bus network | 39% Euro VI, 0% zero emission (Q3 19/20) | 59% Euro VI, 1% zero emission | 100% EuroVI fleet | 50% zero emissions fleet |
| To serve vulnerable users and those travelling in non-peak times, increased number of bus miles in the early morning and evening (after 6pm) services | TBC | | TBC | TBC |
| Improved housing accessibility by bus via the core bus network | TBC | | TBC | TBC |
| Improved employment accessibility by bus via the core bus network | TBC | | TBC | TBC |

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|--|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Satisfaction with personal security while on the bus | 81% (very/fairly satisfied) | N/A | 90% | 95% |
| Improved passenger satisfaction with value for money | 62% (very/fairly satisfied) | N/A | 75% | 90% |

Engagement overview

- 2.19 The BSIP is also building on a sound base of passenger insight gained through public consultations on the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy and Bus Strategy (2017) and Connectivity Infrastructure Plan (2021), as well as the ongoing work conducted by WYCA’s Research and Intelligence department and Transport Focus.
- 2.20 Furthermore, extensive engagement with District officers and bus operators has taken place specifically to support development of the BSIP proposals over the last six months.
- 2.21 Additionally, the BSIP has been consulted on at meetings including, but not limited to:
- 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)
 - Transport Committee (17th September)
 - Leaders / Chief Executive briefings (w/c 11th October)
 - Alliance Executive Board (20th October)

Stakeholder feedback and support for our BSIP submission

- 2.22 DfT guidance requires that the BSIP is supported by local bus operators.
- 2.23 A working draft BSIP document was shared with members of the Bus Alliance in September for comment.
- 2.24 Letters of Support have since been requested from Bus Operators and other stakeholders and will be included as an appendix to the BSIP submission.

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 BSIP will seek to establish a fully inclusive and gender-neutral bus system and provide an attractive and viable option for all members of the community, regardless of where they live or their personal characteristics.
- 5.2 As well as being an inherent to the strategic direction of the plan, the BSIP will include specific measures to address inequalities and support Equality and Diversity including:
- Multi-agency approach to addressing safety of customers especially women and girls, including infrastructure enhancements – such as CCTV and improved lighting at stops and stations – as well as new incident reporting tools and better promotion of the existing support available, such as information, to make people feel safer while they travel.
 - Targeted engagement with key customer groups including women and girls, young people, people with protected characteristics
 - Monitoring of passenger satisfaction (in total, and disaggregated, including by age and gender)
 - Improved, more inclusive customer service and support – so all passengers have the rights tools to travel with confidence and the help they need if their journey does not go to plan.
 - Ensure service frequencies extend throughout the day from early morning until evening and are designed to serve the particular needs of families with children, shift workers and those working in the night-time economy.
- 5.3 A full Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted and included as an appendix to the final 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 The Combined Authority approves the BSIP and agrees to delegate any final changes to the Managing Director in consultation with the Mayor. The BSIP will be submitted to DfT before the deadline of 30th October 2021.

11. Background Documents

11.1 None

12. Appendices

Exempt Appendix 1 – DRAFT Bus Service Improvement Plan Executive Summary

Appendix 2 – Letter from Baroness Vere dated 7 September 2021