

**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 5 November 2021

**Subject:** **Bus Enhanced Partnership**

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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 report is to provide Transport Committee with an overview of activity to develop a Bus Enhanced Partnership for West Yorkshire.
- 1.2 To gain Transport Committee endorsement for the timescales associated with the development and duration of the EP and West Yorkshire's approach to the development of EP Schemes.

## 2. Information

### Background

- 2.1 The National Bus Strategy, [Bus Back Better](#), published in March 2021 signalled a strong commitment from Government to bus. It acknowledges the failures of deregulation and looks to strengthen the role of Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) through the devolution of funding.
- 2.2 As part of this strengthening role the Strategy requires LTAs to commit, among other things, to the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by October 2021 and the implementation of a Bus Enhanced Partnership (EP) or be pursuing franchising by April 2022.

- 2.3 In June 2021 the Combined Authority [served notice](#) of its intention to establish an EP with operators to improve local bus services. The notice invited all operators running services in West Yorkshire to participate in the formulation of the EP Plan and its associated Scheme(s).
- 2.4 The BSIP was submitted to Government on 31 October 2021 following approval by the Combined Authority on 22 October and sets out the CA's ambition for bus, regardless of the delivery model. It identifies a wide range of interventions that will enable the ambition to be achieved, with those that can be delivered over the short-term potentially being delivered by the EP, and those longer-term actions being delivered as part of the wider bus reform process. The Executive Summary for the BSIP is set out at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 The EP will be the mechanism for the delivery of the early stages of the BSIP. It provides details on the Combined Authority and operators' shared plan to improve bus services and provision in West Yorkshire and must build on the ideas and interventions set out in the BSIP in much more granular detail.
- 2.6 It is a statutory partnership between the Combined Authority as the LTA, West Yorkshire local authorities and all operators running bus services in the region and needs to be approved by all these parties to come into operation.
- 2.7 A statutory EP must be made up of two distinct elements:
- **EP Plan:** the strategic document setting out the vision and objectives for the EP reflecting the ambitions and contents of the BSIP and providing more detail on proposed interventions where appropriate. It would also set out the governance arrangements for the partnership.
  - **EP Scheme(s):** linking the commitments around specific interventions that will deliver the EP Plan and identify facilities and/or measures<sup>1</sup> within a defined geography. At least one EP Scheme must be in place at all times in addition to the EP Plan.

## **EP Timescales**

### **Initial EP Plan and Scheme(s) - Development**

- 2.8 As referenced in 2.2 above the initial EP Plan and at least one EP Scheme need to be in place by April 2022. Prior to it coming into force a number of statutory processes need to have been completed. These are:
- **Operator Objection Period:** statutory 28-day period where bus operators can make a formal objection in writing if they disagree with the content of the EP.
  - **Public Consultation:** a minimum of four weeks public consultation on the content of the EP.

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<sup>1</sup> Facilities are new or existing physical assets and measures are everything else deemed suitable for inclusion in an EP Scheme.

- 2.9 To enable the EP to meet the deadline of April 2022 it is proposed that the Operator Objection Period begins no later than 10 December 2021 and Public Consultation runs from 17 January to 13 February 2022.
- 2.10 Subject to the statutory consultation being completed and no substantial objections being received the final EP will be brought for approval to Transport Committee on 4 March 2022 and the Combined Authority on 17 March 2022.
- 2.11 Transport Committee are asked to endorse the timescales for the development of the EP, including public consultation.

#### Initial EP Plan and Scheme(s) – Duration

- 2.12 The EP will not operate in isolation and must recognise that in parallel activity is taking place to understand the case for bus franchising in West Yorkshire. This process could take up to five years if bus franchising is selected as the preferred approach for bus reform in West Yorkshire.
- 2.13 Given that the alternative to the EP – bus franchising – is unlikely to be in place before 2027 it is proposed that the initial EP for West Yorkshire covers the period 2022-2027.
- 2.14 Transport Committee are asked to endorse the suggested duration for the initial EP based on this information.

#### EP Schemes

- 2.15 Government guidance suggests the following in terms of EP Schemes:
- LTAs only consider a single Scheme due to time pressures initially.
  - There is no limit to Scheme volume or range of content but the focus should be on what can be delivered by the end of March 2022 and are of the highest priority.
  - Further Schemes can be added post March 2022.
  - Focus on what LTAs can provide through facilities and measures.
  - Include current bus spending and memorialise existing infrastructure.
- 2.16 A two phased approach is proposed to be taken in West Yorkshire for the development of EP Scheme(s):
- **Phase 1:** Initial focus is on one EP Scheme to be in place by April 2022. It will be formed by a series of interventions that already form an existing programme or project and will already have the backing of stakeholders. Taking this approach will minimise the risk of being unable to meet the April 2022 deadline as a result of objections or the need to make fundamental changes.
  - **Phase 2:** Post April 2022 the approach will be to bring forward additional EP Schemes. Each new EP Scheme would be subject to the statutory operator objection period and public consultation to provide transparency and accountability.

2.17 The content of the initial EP Scheme will be the subject of stakeholder engagement throughout November 2021. The interventions to be included will be informed by those outlined in the BSIP.

2.18 Transport Committee are asked to endorse the proposed approach to the development of EP Schemes.

### **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 EP is one of the mechanisms that will deliver bus reform in West Yorkshire, a key area of focus for the West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan over the next three years, by putting in place measures that will help transition journeys from the private car to public transport and active travel.

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

4.1 Buses are important in providing and enabling access to employment and training opportunities across West Yorkshire. Interventions outlined in the BSIP which transition into the EP will consider the needs of communities with higher levels of deprivation and those of less affluent travellers.

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

5.1 The BSIP seeks to identify options which make travel by bus an attractive and viable option for all members of the community. Where interventions relating to this transition into the EP they 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 EP.

### **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 The process proposed by this report is in line with the provisions of the Bus Services Act and associated guidance.

### **8. Staffing Implications**

8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### **9. External Consultees**

9.1 West Yorkshire local authorities and local bus operators have been consulted on the proposals documented in this report. Their feedback has been taken into account and has shaped proposals where appropriate.

### **10. Recommendations**

10.1 That Transport Committee endorses the approach to developing the Enhanced Partnership as set out in this report including the timescales for public consultation.

**11. Background Documents**

None

**12. Appendices**

Exempt Appendix 1 – BSIP Executive Summary