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**Report to:** Transport Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 18 November 2021

**Subject:** **Bus Service Improvement Plan**

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## **1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Transport Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – which was submitted to Government in October 2021 – and provide a more general update on the current state of local bus services.

## **2. Information**

### **The West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**

#### Background context

- 2.1 'Bus Back Better: The National Bus Strategy for England', published in March 2021, set out the Government's ambition for transforming the delivery of bus services across the country. When announced the Strategy was tied to a £3 billion funding pot. To be eligible for access to this funding, all Local Transport Authorities were required to commit to using Bus Service Acts Power by June 2021, and to submit a BSIP which outlines their local ambitions by October 2021.
- 2.2 In June 2021, following approval from Transport Committee, the Combined Authority published Notices of Intent to develop an Enhanced Partnership and begin an assessment of a Franchising scheme(s).
- 2.3 As per Government guidelines, the Enhanced Partnership - which is a formal legal arrangement that will impose requirements on both the Combined Authority and bus operators - must be agreed and operational by April 2022.
- 2.4 The assessment of a Franchising Scheme(s) is a longer-term process that will form a key part of the Combined Authority's ongoing examination of bus reform and work to fulfil the Mayor's commitment to 'Bring buses back under

public control, introduce simpler fares, contactless ticketing and greener buses'. The bus reform roadmap below sets out the proposed timescale for a franchised scheme to be in place.

### Bus reform roadmap



#### Timescale assumptions to achieve a statutory Franchising scheme

*Timescales may be extended in the event of a legal challenge*

<b>Franchising assessment development:</b> <b>18 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issues / delays assumed re data</li> <li>Model scope and build process</li> </ul>	<b>Assessment audit:</b> <b>3 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit readiness assumed</li> </ul>	<b>Consultation period:</b> <b>3 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive exercise assumed</li> </ul>	<b>Consultation review &amp; response:</b> <b>6 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large volume of responses assumed</li> </ul>	<b>Franchising procurement &amp; mobilisation:</b> <b>18-24 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work previously completed on procurement process &amp; documentation</li> </ul>
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### BSIP overview

- 2.5 The submission of the BSIP was approved by the Combined Authority on 22 October 2021 and submitted to the Department of Transport (DfT) on 29 October 2021.
- 2.6 The final Bus Service Improvement Plan and supporting Executive have been published on the Combined Authority website at [www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/improving-transport/bsip](http://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/improving-transport/bsip)
- 2.7 The BSIP summary table, as per pro-forma provided by the DfT, is included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.8 The BSIP's ambition has three key themes:
- 2.9 **A safe and inclusive bus service** - which means improving accessibility support for those with physical disabilities and other health and social needs; ensuring and improving the perception of safety for passengers using the bus network, especially women and girls; and adapting the full service offer so it better suits more people than just the traditional urban commuter, such as early morning / late evening shift workers and caregivers who are more likely to make complicated, multi-legged journeys.

- 2.10 **Better connected communities** – this means providing better bus connections across the region, especially in areas of deprivation and outside the major urban conurbations, including rural areas and towns and villages. It will also mean evolving the bus network to respond to changing demand and travel patterns caused by the Covid pandemic, as well as how other models beyond traditional bus services – such as Demand Responsive Transport and Park & Rides – could support this. More generally, it also includes improved frequency and longer, more consistent services.
- 2.11 **Decarbonisation and integrated, sustainable travel** – which speaks to the Combined Authority’s efforts to respond to the climate emergency; achieve a net-zero bus network by 2036, as per existing commitments; and to establish a sustainable transport network across the region (including bus, active modes and mass transit) than can provide an attractive and viable alternative to the private car.
- 2.12 The Combined Authority developed the BSIP’s ambition in collaboration with political leaders, local bus operators and other key stakeholders including campaign and special interest groups.
- 2.13 Bus passenger and wider public insight was also considered through analysis of existing sources such as Transport Focus research and the Combined Authority’s own Public Perceptions of Transport and Covid tracker surveys, as well as evidence from previous consultations on the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy, Bus Strategy and Connectivity Infrastructure Plan. A full overview of efforts and our approach to understanding bus passengers is included in the BSIP.

#### Key deliverables

- 2.14 To improve local buses the BSIP includes the ambition to deliver improvements that will enable:
- 2.15 **An enhanced, fully inclusive and more cohesive bus network** – which takes people where they need to go, when they need to go.
- 2.16 **Clear and simple fares** – to make paying for bus travel more affordable, easier, convenient and flexible.
- 2.17 **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.
- 2.18 **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.
- 2.19 **More green and better vehicles** – to improve the onboard experience and make bus them sustainable choice for travel in West Yorkshire.

2.20 The plan of headline deliverables is included as **Appendix 2** to this report. This has been separated in to three key time frames – ‘quick wins’ (2022), ‘short term’ (2022-2024) and ‘medium to long term’ (2024+). These deliverables will need to be supported by strong communications to attract more people to travel by bus. The Transport Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the techniques required to achieve this.

#### Our funding ask

2.21 To deliver on its ambition the BSIP includes a funding ask to Government. The summary table, below, outlines this.

Package	Revenue cost (£000) BSIP funding ask Total 5 Years	Capital cost (£000) BSIP funding ask Total 5 Years	Total capital cost – inc. CRSTS (£000) Total 5 Years*
<b>Bus priority infrastructure</b>	0	23,400	679,877
<b>Other infrastructure and assets</b>	28,750	2,910	2,910
<b>Fares support</b>	40,540	0	0
<b>Ticketing reform</b>	990	2,543	2,543
<b>Bus service support</b>	88,384	39,000	39,000
<b>Marketing, promotions and communications</b>	2,650	100	100
<b>Enhanced Partnership and Franchising delivery</b>	550	0	0
<b>Zero emission buses</b>	0	120,000	176,500
<b>Customer service and information</b>	4,436	42,889	42,889
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	2,480	0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>168,780</b>	<b>230,842</b>	<b>943,819</b>

2.22 An additional funding breakdown, to deliver just the quick wins and short-term deliverables (as per the summary plan) was developed and valued at approximately £129m.

2.23 The Combined Authority’s recent £830m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement is likely to form a key capital element of the funding award from Government to support the BSIP.

2.24 Confirmation of our funding allocation is expected in early 2022.

#### Key performance indicators and targets

2.25 As per DfT guidance, the Combined Authority was required to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets to measure the success of the BSIP in delivering on its ambition. The full list of primary KPIs is included as **Appendix 3** to this report.

- 2.26 The BSIP includes an overview of how the Combined Authority will measure and monitor these KPIs. BSIP guidance's requires all authorities to report on their KPIs on a six-monthly basis
- 2.27 It is the Combined Authority's ambition to further develop new and existing measures and the data sets to better understand the social and demographic breakdown of bus users and the region's wider population to understand how the BSIP is supporting our wider equality, diversity and inclusivity ambitions. Funding to support this has been included in the BSIP funding ask.

Risks and challenges

- 2.28 The Combined Authority is in the process of developing a risk register to support the BSIP. Some of the key risks identified at this stage are outlined in the table below.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and implementation resource availability to ensure deliverability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertaking resource mapping for scheme development. Identification of opportunities to undertake joint procurements with complementary and interfacing projects. Early market engagement planned for future stages.</li> <li>Assurance processes at scheme and package level being established</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The submission doesn't attract the level of funding expected and proposed interventions have to be prioritised, meaning some are unable to be delivered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with partners to understand alternative sources of future funding</li> <li>Work to understand costs and benefits via a mechanism to prioritise schemes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambitions are not fully realised through the Enhanced Partnership scheme development and expected benefits not delivered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake regular reviews of the schemes as they develop to ensure alignment with the programme benefits. Ensure expected benefits are defined at initial stages of project development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-going impacts and future uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic mean recovery in the bus market and associated benefits are not realised as quickly as expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-going monitoring and review of the Covid-19 situation and ensuring customer deliverables continue to be appropriate for the current climate. Continue to work with operators through the Alliance partnership to mitigate any potential issues</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through the pandemic recovery passengers don't return to using the bus which leads to negative financial impacts on operator's ability to run services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-going monitoring of the situation and potential planning to make best use of resources available to ensure services continue to run</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan ambitions doesn't achieve public and political expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued working with partners to ensure the ambitions outlined are achievable as far as possible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing working relationships with local operators as the partnership moves from Voluntary to Enhanced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the positive foundations of Alliance and keeping established governance mechanisms in place and will ensure on-going engagement and collaboration with operators</li> </ul>

### **Development of the Enhanced Partnership**

- 2.29 Now the ambition has been outlined, the implementation and management of the BSIP will need to be considered and developed in more detail, shaped by the level of supporting funding the Combined Authority receives from the Government.
- 2.30 Following the submission of the BSIP, the next step is to develop and agree an Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme(s). Before this is legally 'made' and established operationally – by the Government deadline of April 2022 - it will need to be subject to an operator objection period and public consultation.

### **Wider local bus service delivery update**

- 2.31 Against the backdrop of BSIPs and bus reform, the local bus system continues to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.32 Patronage has returned to approximately 75% of pre-pandemic levels. Further breakdown of this data shows the leisure market has returned more quickly than commuting journeys to town/city centres.
- 2.33 Patronage and passenger travel behaviours and attitudes will continue to be measured closely throughout the autumn and winter.
- 2.34 Driver shortages continue to be an issue for the bus industry and locally this has resulted in increased service cancellations throughout September / and October.
- 2.35 Further information providing an update on the transport network in West Yorkshire is provided in **Appendices 5-8** – which are the latest update reports provided to the Transport Committee (on 5 November 2021).

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

- 3.1 The Combined Authority's BSIP, and programme of bus reform more widely, work to enable a better bus system that encourages more people to travel sustainably by bus rather than a private car, and thus reduce the carbon footprint of transport in the region.

3.2 More specifically, this theme is imbedded in the BSIP and it includes ambitions (and funding ask) for more zero emission buses, as well as retains commitments to all regional buses being Euro VI emission standards by 2026 (improving air quality) and a net-zero bus fleet by 2036, with significant progress by 2030.

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

4.1 Efforts to improve buses, particularly improved network connections in highly deprived communities, will support the region's inclusive growth ambitions by better connecting people to jobs and other opportunities within the region.

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

5.1 The Combined Authority's BSIP places a key emphasis on supporting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. It supports this through a range of measures, including but limited to:

- Evolution of the bus network to support more varied travel patterns beyond the 9 to 5 commute in and out of urban city centres.
- Cheaper, better value fares so bus travel is affordable for all; and better provision of bus services in areas of high deprivation.
- Improved engagement with, and analysis of, the bus passenger market to better understand different passenger demographics and travel behaviours; and support the Combined Authority to develop tailored and effective solutions.
- Efforts to improve the safety and general environment of bus stops, stations and onboard vehicles, particularly for women and girls.
- The provision of audio-visual information on all buses, and other accessibility support including
- The retention of printed travel information to support those at risk of digital exclusion.
- Staff training, including how to support passengers with additional social and physical needs.
- Commitments in our draft Passenger Charter to safe and inclusive bus network including a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and antisocial behaviour.

5.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted to support the BSIP and included as part of the submission to DfT.

#### **6. Financial Implications**

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

#### **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 No external consultations have been undertaken.

## **10. Recommendations**

10.1 That the Transport Scrutiny Committee notes this report and the contents of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

10.2 That the Transport Scrutiny Committee provides advice and views on the next steps to deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the behaviour change required to increase bus patronage.

## **11. Background Documents**

[The West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan \(99 pages\)](#)

[BSIP Executive Summary](#)

[Bus Back Better: the National Bus Strategy for England \(83 pages\)](#)

## **12. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – BSIP summary table (DfT pro-forma)

Appendix 2 – BSIP Deliverables: Plan on a Page

Appendix 3 – BSIP primary KPIs summary tables

Appendix 4 – BSIP Executive Summary

Appendix 5 – Transport Network Update Report to Transport Committee (5 Nov 2021)

Appendix 6 – Insights on transport network use

Appendix 7 – Rail network performance data

Appendix 8 – Metro branded activity measures