

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 17 March 2022

Subject: **Bus Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme**

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| Is this a key decision? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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 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 To provide an overview of the content included in our finalised West Yorkshire Bus Enhanced Partnership Plan and initial Scheme
- 1.2 To approve the publication of the Notice of Intent to 'make' an EP Plan and Scheme for West Yorkshire

2. Information

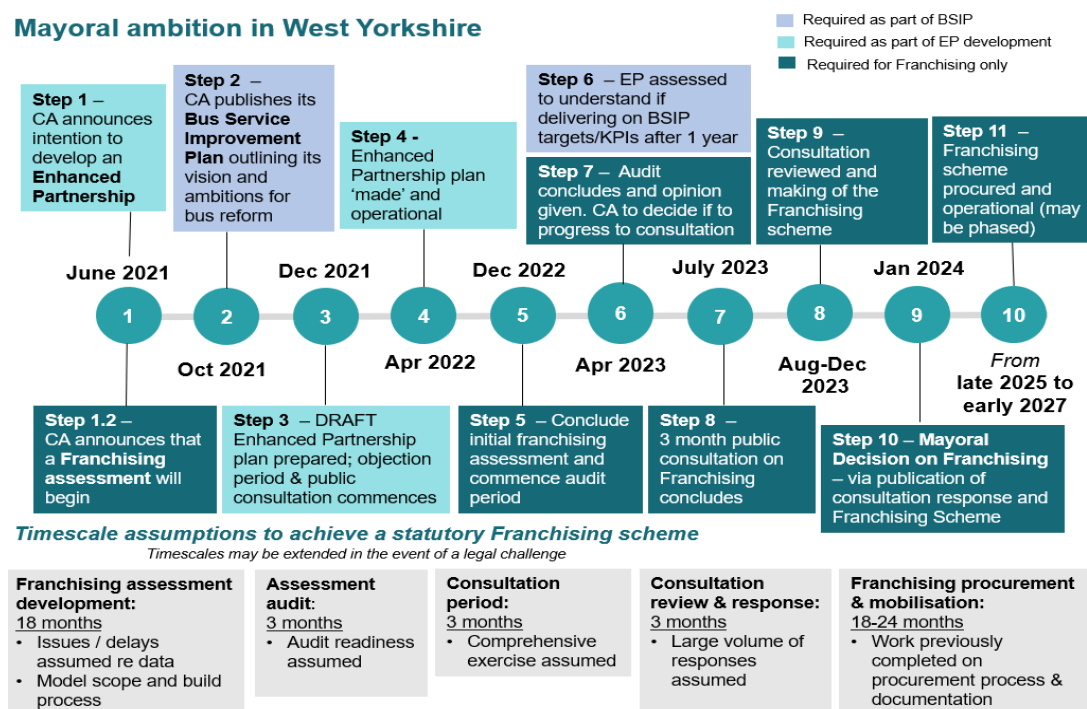
Background

- 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. It also sets out that for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to access funding from April 2022 there is a requirement to be in an Enhanced Partnership (EP) or actively pursuing bus franchising by the end of March 2022.
- 2.2 In May 2021 West Yorkshire elected its first mayor. Of several mayoral manifesto pledges was the ambition to 'bring buses back into public control'. In response the Combined Authority has set out a "roadmap" to achieving this pledge and the process and draft timescale for delivery is set out in Figure 1

along with the time needed to meet the requirements of the legislative process.

- 2.3 In addition to the “roadmap” the Combined Authority served notice in June 2021 of its intention to prepare an Assessment of a Proposed Franchising Scheme. Alongside this Notice the Combined Authority also served notice of its intention to establish an EP with operators to improve local bus services and invited all operators running services in West Yorkshire to participate in the formulation of the EP Plan and its associated Scheme(s).

Figure 1: Proposed Timescale for Enhanced Partnership and an Assessment for a Bus Franchising scheme



- 2.4 While bus franchising is a longer-term proposition to enact bus reform in the region the EP will, at least until a decision on franchising has been made, deliver benefits to passengers in the short term.
- 2.5 The EP will set clear targets and standards to ensure it furthers the overall bus strategy aims to increase patronage and through that secure the wider goals of inclusivity and carbon reduction. As the Assessment of a Proposed Franchising Scheme will be developed alongside the EP then if the EP does not achieve its aims, then this would provide evidence to support a decision to progress with a franchising scheme. It is expected that the EP will be included as part of the Assessment of a Proposed Franchising Scheme.
- 2.6 While the National Bus Strategy set out the different ways LTAs could access future bus funding it also set out a requirement to submit a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to Government by 31 October 2021.
- 2.7 The BSIP was submitted to Government following approval by the Combined Authority on 22 October and sets out the Combined Authority’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.

- 2.8 The EP will be the mechanism for the delivery of the early stages of the BSIP. It provides details on the Combined Authority's, West Yorkshire local authorities, and operator's 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.
- 2.9 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. Each of the Local Authorities of West Yorkshire will be signatories to the EP.
- 2.10 The EP will be overseen by the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance. The governance arrangements that are currently established for the Bus Alliance will be strengthened and adapted for the EP. The Bus Alliance Executive Board will be chaired by the Chair of Transport Committee or Lead Member Public Transport to ensure the electorate is fully represented in the governance of the bus service through the EP.
- 2.11 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 within a defined geography. At least one EP Scheme must always be in place in addition to the EP Plan. Successive iterations of the scheme would be planned, across West Yorkshire.
- 2.12 The initial West Yorkshire EP (comprising of an EP Plan and one EP Scheme) was originally required to be in place by April 2022, to ensure West Yorkshire could access discretionary bus funding available from April 2022. Without the EP the region would not have been able to access this funding. The EP is also required to be in place to ensure the passenger benefits that can be achieved through bus reform are delivered prior to a decision being made on bus franchising.
- 2.13 Prior to it coming into force a number of statutory processes have been completed. The Combined Authority approved the content of the EP at its 9 December 2021 meeting, enabling the statutory 28-day operator objection period to commence. This completed on 17 January 2022 and no objections were received from operators.
- 2.14 During the objection period, on 11 January, a letter from DfT was sent to all Local Transport Authorities advising of an amendment to the timescales for having an EP in place, and asking for a draft EP Plan and Scheme to be

submitted by the end of April 2022. The letter also suggested that if the statutory consultation element of the process had not yet commenced then there would be no need to start this yet and instead, they would recommend pausing until the outcome of the BSIP funding announcement.

- 2.15 Combined Authority officers carefully considered the implications of the letter and agreed to proceed with the original timescales.
- 2.16 On 2 February, the Combined Authority therefore proceeded to consultation with a number of identified statutory consultees, which closed on 23 February. Eight consultation responses were received and upon review of the feedback it was determined that no major changes were required to be made to the Plan and initial Scheme at this stage. However some key reflections to be considered and addressed in the coming months include:
- Establishing an Enhanced Partnership stakeholder group with certain organisations such as Trade Unions, to further engage with them on EP Scheme development
 - A requirement for further public conversation with residents around their experiences of using bus services and proposed interventions to improve this, to take place later this year. This evidence will help inform the annual review of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, as well as future revisions to the Enhanced Partnership Plan, initial Scheme and development of future Schemes.
- 2.17 Details of the final content of the EP Plan and Scheme are linked to in the Background Documents (with an overview provided below). The Combined Authority are asked to approve the final Plan and Scheme and publishing of the Notice of Intent that an EP Plan and Scheme have been made (Appendix 1).

West Yorkshire EP Plan

- 2.18 As set out in 2.8 above the EP Plan reflects the ambitions and content of the BSIP, the content of which was considered and approved by the Combined Authority at its 23 October 2021 meeting.
- 2.19 Given the close alignment with the BSIP a large proportion of the content of the EP Plan will be familiar to Members with further information available via the published BSIP. As an example of where close alignment has occurred the vision and objectives of the BSIP have been retained for the EP.
- 2.20 Where the EP Plan departs from the BSIP is in relation to the timescales that it covers. While the BSIP is the long-term strategic approach to improving bus services and the network in the region, the initial EP Plan takes a shorter-term view, focussing on what improvements can be made in the period up to 2027. This reflects the indicated timescales for deciding on and implementing a bus franchising scheme (if bus franchising is determined to be the preferred option for delivering bus reform in West Yorkshire).

- 2.21 Due to the close alignment with the BSIP, the EP Plan must be clear on how it will help to deliver the themes and workstreams of the BSIP. The full Enhanced Partnership Plan is linked in the Background Documents.

West Yorkshire EP Scheme

- 2.22 The EP plan sets out the requirement to deliver a number of overarching EP schemes, which will embed key principles across West Yorkshire. These EP schemes include delivery of clear principles for the core bus network and a customer charter for all passengers. The mechanism for delivering the outputs and outcomes identified in the EP Plan is via the different EP Schemes that are implemented alongside the EP Plan.
- 2.23 The EP Plan alone does not constitute an EP. For the EP to come into force the EP Plan must be accompanied by at least one EP Scheme at all times.
- 2.24 Due to the timescales laid down from Government for the EP to be 'made' it has not been possible to produce the full suite of EP Schemes that would be required to meet the ambitions and content of the BSIP. As such a modular approach to the delivery of EP Schemes is being taken, whereby an initial EP Scheme has been produced to meet the initial timescales, with other EP Schemes being developed throughout 2022 and 2023. The Indicative Programme of Future Schemes sets out the indicative delivery plan for the variations to the EP scheme and the new EP schemes that are proposed to be developed.
- 2.25 To fully deliver the ambition of the BSIP a suite of EP Schemes will need to be produced. They are focused on:
- Bus infrastructure (first EP Scheme to come forward) - each new bus priority project will be added to the EP scheme as a variation
 - Bus core network -to contractualise delivery of the high frequency network including the provisions of the network navigation colour coded system across West Yorkshire
 - Fares and ticketing -this will sit alongside the Statutory Ticketing Scheme (which obligates operators to accept multi operator tickets) and the Concessionary Fare Schemes (which remain a Combined Authority responsibility outside the EP).
 - Customer services and information -contractualising an agreement on information provision across the Combined Authority and operators
 - Bus connecting network- to establish standards for lower frequency commercial and CA funded services to rural and less populated communities
 - Air quality and decarbonisation - agreement on delivery of Euro VI and zero emission buses
 - Communications and marketing – including a unified branding for the bus network
 - Agreement around the Urban Traffic Management Control delivery and operation
- 2.26 All of the EP schemes set out in the list above will be West Yorkshire wide. Using the Network Navigation colour coded system for the core bus network

as a worked example, obligations regarding displaying the route names and colours on infrastructure and buses will sit in the Core Network and Bus Infrastructure schemes with obligations regarding incorporating the colour coding map on buses and customer facing material services in the Customer Services and Information and Communications and Marketing schemes. This approach has been launched in Leeds and will be rolled out over West Yorkshire from 2022.

- 2.27 In terms of the Air Quality and Decarbonisation EP Scheme the Combined Authority submitted its final West Yorkshire Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) bid to the Department of Transport on 31 January 2022. The ZEBRA Programme aims to increase the number of zero emission buses operating on the bus network to 10% of the total fleet and is working with the three main operators (Arriva, First Bus and Transdev) to realise this objective.
- 2.28 The Indicative Programme of Future Schemes sets out the delivery timescale for each EP scheme, further definition of each EP scheme will come forward in due course. The initial EP Scheme that will come forward through the EP is a Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme. The purpose of this EP Scheme is to contractualise both existing and future bus priority infrastructure to ensure this infrastructure is implemented and maintained to provide a consistent, quick and high-quality bus service on the routes which it is applied to.
- 2.29 Across West Yorkshire there are a high number of bus priority infrastructure projects that have either been delivered, are in delivery or are to be developed which ultimately will be included and contractualised within this EP Scheme. For example, bus priority infrastructure projects featuring in programmes such as the Leeds Public Transport Improvement Programme (LPTIP), Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) will be included in the Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme overtime covering projects in all five West Yorkshire districts.
- 2.30 The high volume of bus infrastructure projects that the Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme applies to, and the original timescales imposed on the production of the initial EP by Government, has necessitated a proportional approach to be applied to the development and delivery of this EP Scheme initially. Considering this, the first bus infrastructure project to be included in this EP Scheme is the A61(South) in Leeds with other bus infrastructure projects in the other West Yorkshire districts added rapidly post March 2022.
- 2.31 In the first instance formal agreement to the provisions outlined will only apply to those obligated parties on the A61 (South) e.g. bus operators, Leeds City Council and the Combined Authority, however the other four West Yorkshire local authorities will be asked to sign-up to the principles of the Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme to facilitate bus infrastructure projects to be added from the other four local authority areas.

A61 South

- 2.32 The A61(South) is identified as a bus priority corridor in LPTIP and for the purposes of the provisions that are included in the Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme applies to the stretch of the A61(S) from Hunslet Road / South

Accommodation Road Junction to A639 Wakefield Road / Queen Street Junction

- 2.33 A variety of provisions are included in the Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme relating to the A61(S) (see Background Documents). These are to be delivered by Leeds City Council, the bus operators running services on the corridor (Arriva and First Bus) and the Combined Authority.
- 2.34 While the provisions outlined in Enhanced Partnership Scheme – Bus Infrastructure are those which will be included in the Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme from April 2022, they do not represent the extent of the provisions that will eventually apply to the A61(S). It is the intention to add additional provisions post April 2022 through negotiations with the bus operators and Leeds City Council.
- 2.35 To make variations to the Bus Infrastructure EP Scheme i.e. to add additional provisions to the A61(S) aspects covered or to add other bus priority corridor projects, a variation mechanism will be used that only requires the Combined Authority to formally consult with bus operators running services on the corridor(s) affected. For all other EP Scheme the statutory consultation process will be applied when these are first ‘made’.

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, however it is worth noting that future EP Schemes may obligate the Combined Authority and/or its EP partners to fund specific facilities and/or measures. Where this is

the case for the Combined Authority separate reports will be brought to the relevant Committee for approval.

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 The approach to the production of future EP Schemes depending on scope and breadth, could increase the burden on the bus policy team necessitating the need to recruit additional resources to service their production, engagement and consultation. Where this is found to be the case a separate report will be brought to the relevant Committee for approval.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1. Informal consultation has taken place via the Bus Alliance, focus groups and drop-in sessions with a wide range of stakeholders e.g. West Yorkshire local authorities, seldom heard groups, bus operators. Their opinions and feedback have been integrated into the draft West Yorkshire EP Plan and Scheme.
- 9.2. In addition, a number of statutory consultees have been consulted on the Enhanced Plan and initial Scheme.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. That the Combined Authority approves the content of the final EP Plan and Scheme.
- 10.2. That the Combined Authority approves the publication of the Notice of Intent to 'make' an EP Plan and Scheme.

11. Background Documents

West Yorkshire EP Plan - <https://admin.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8185/item-6-background-document-enhanced-partnership-plan.pdf>

Indicative Programme of Future Schemes - <https://admin.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8184/item-6-background-document-enhanced-partnership-plan-indicative-programme-of-future-schemes.pdf>

West Yorkshire EP Scheme – Bus Infrastructure - <https://admin.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8186/item-6-background-document-enhanced-partnership-scheme-bus-infrastructure.pdf>

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Notice of Intent to 'make' an EP Plan and Scheme