

**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022

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

**Director:** Dave Pearson, Director, Transport and Property Services

**Author:** Thomas Lock, Policy Officer

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 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 The purpose of this report is to provide Transport Committee with an update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the required next steps for the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance and the Enhanced partnership.

## 2. Information

### **Bus Service Improvement Plan – funding award**

#### Background

- 2.1 The Combined Authority submitted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport (DfT) in October 2021. The development of the BSIP – which sets out our ambitious vision and plan for improving local bus services – was a requirement of the ‘Bus Back Better: The National Bus Strategy for England’ (2021).
- 2.2 The National Bus Strategy also required local authorities to develop an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with local operators or a Franchising scheme to be eligible for future government funding support for local bus services including from a dedicated funding pot to support delivery of BSIPs. The Enhanced Partnership, which is managed by the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance, was established in April 2022.

- 2.3 The West Yorkshire BSIP set out a plan of interventions across five key delivery areas, which work towards:
- **An enhanced, fully inclusive and more cohesive bus network** – which takes people where they need to go, when they need to go.
  - **Clear and simple fares** – to make paying for bus travel more affordable, easier, convenient and flexible.
  - **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.
  - **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.

- 2.4 The BSIP Executive Summary is shared as a background document to this report.

#### Indicative Bus Service Improvement Plan funding award

- 2.5 In April 2022, the Combined Authority received confirmation from the DfT that based on the strength of its BSIP, it had successfully been awarded an indicative settlement of £69,974,070 revenue funding over three financial years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25) to support delivery. The full letter is included in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.6 Although this award is one of the highest received by any local authority in England, it does fall significantly short of the West Yorkshire BSIP's original associated funding ask of £399,622,000 (£168,780,000 revenue and £230,842,000 capital) over five financial years.
- 2.7 Nevertheless, the Combined Authority propose to prioritise this funding to subsidise fares (driving down the cost of single journey and day tickets / the 'daily cap') and invest in new routes and enhanced services, radically improving the local bus network and delivering significant improvements for local passengers.
- 2.8 The headline fare reductions were announced publicly by the Mayor in early May and build on the original proposition set out in the BSIP seeking to cap single fares at £2.00 and the WY Day Saver ticket (the maximum price anyone should pay for a day's bus travel in the region) at £4.50. The fare setting process, wider ticket range and subsidy methodology will be prescribed within the Enhanced Partnership scheme following detailed discussions with bus companies and the West Yorkshire Ticketing Company. The maximum fares will be reviewed each year based upon inflation indices.
- 2.9 Investment in the network will aim to reconnect communities, particularly in towns and villages, left isolated by service changes and cuts made over recent years. There will also be a focus on better connections to work, education,

health and leisure opportunities across the region rather than just supporting travel in and out of major urban centres. The details of this network plan will be developed over the coming months (as explained under Item 8).

- 2.10 Other prioritised investments include improvements to network travel information, shared training for all customer facing staff, initiatives to support safer travel, and marketing and communications to promote and maximise the benefits / passenger uptake of these BSIP interventions.
- 2.11 A summary of this proposed spend, as submitted to DfT on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 for further discussion, is included in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Summary of proposed BSIP revenue funding spend**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Total revenue spend - 3 years (£000m)</b>
<b>Clear and simple fares</b>	<b>34,000 (49%)</b>
• Fare reduction / simplification	24,500
• Additional fare incentives	9,000
• Mobility Credits and targeted marketing	500
<b>An enhanced bus network</b>	<b>25,350 (36%)</b>
• New and improved services + service reinstatements	13,500
• Superbus – town network enhancements	10,600
• Demand Responsive Transport pilots	1,000
• Mobility Hubs	250
<b>Improved customer service and information</b>	<b>4,350 (6%)</b>
• Management of network disruptions	450
• Extension of the Travel Plan Network	500
• Shared training for all customer-facing staff + mystery shopper	2,400
• Enhanced Safer Travel Campaign	1,000
<b>Behaviour change, targeted and general marketing campaigns</b>	<b>1,000 (2%)</b>
<b>Internal resource and capacity</b>	<b>5,000 (7%)</b>

- 2.12 Capital funding from the Combined Authority's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) is also expected to support delivery of the BSIP, including:
- More bus priority schemes
  - New zero emission buses
  - Integration initiatives including the technical onboard infrastructure for contactless capping, Mobility Hubs and Demand Responsive Transport schemes.
- 2.13 These investments will be made against the backdrop of significant challenges for the local bus system including ongoing suppressed patronage as result of the Covid-19 pandemic, cost inflation (both to operate services and, more generally, rising living costs which are impacting passengers spending power), driver shortages and, finally, the resultant commercial service withdrawals. These issues and the Combined Authority's response to them are covered in more detail under Item 8.
- 2.14 Furthermore, the time-limited nature of the BSIP funding (3 financial years) means the Combined Authority must be focussed on supporting the commercial sustainability of these initiatives beyond that period to avoid sudden fare increases and service withdrawals in the future.

#### Next steps for the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance / Enhanced Partnership

- 2.15 The DfT require the Combined Authority to submit by 30th June 2022 a final funding summary table as well as a draft Enhanced Partnership Scheme, which explains how the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance will work together to implement the relevant interventions.
- 2.16 The Enhanced Partnership will therefore be the mechanism through which the Combined Authority will seek to negotiate the subsidy of single fares to a maximum of £2.00. Operators have engaged in positive discussions regarding fare subsidies to date, but this still has to be formally agreed.
- 2.17 This paper seeks endorsement from Transport Committee of this approach, including the proposed funding priorities, with sign off on the final submission to be provided by the Combined Authority at its committee meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.
- 2.18 From July, the DfT is then expected to review the documents, provide feedback and agree it meets their expectations before final confirmation of the funding settlement.
- 2.19 The Combined Authority expects to receive the funding and begin delivery of the associated initiatives from the Autumn onwards.

#### **Engaging the public – 'The Big Bus Chat'**

- 2.20 The Combined Authority is proposing to conduct a public engagement exercise starting in June 2022 to understand current, post-pandemic attitudes

to bus travel and how far the existing iteration of the BSIP goes to meeting their ambitions for the system.

- 2.21 It is proposed that the engagement will focus primarily on the BSIP themes of the bus network, fares and ticketing, customer service and information, air quality and decarbonisation, bus priority and general attitudes to bus travel
- 2.22 Feedback from this engagement will be used to inform the next version of the BSIP, which is due its annual update in October 2022, as well as be used as an input to the Bus Reform Assessment.
- 2.23 A key aim of the engagement will be to communicate with non or infrequent bus user and seldom heard community groups in order to ensure the views gained are truly reflective of the region's diverse population and provide useful insight into how more people can be encouraged to travel by bus.
- 2.24 It is proposed to begin the engagement in mid-June for approximately six weeks, with key activities including a survey, utilisation of YourVoice and social media to record views, A Q&A webinar with industry leaders, in-person events at bus stations and other non-transport related venues, #TellTracy events led by the Mayor to engage with community groups, Partnership activity with operators to promote passenger and driver involvement, communication activity to raise public awareness.
- 2.25 Participants will also be invited to share their contacts for involvement in future consultation and engagement activity as our plans for transforming local buses continue develop.

### **Free Bus Sunday 5 June 2022**

- 2.26 To encourage passengers back to the bus and to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Mayor has announced that bus travel in West Yorkshire will be free for everyone on Sunday 5 June. All operators with services in West Yorkshire are supporting the day, including major operators Arriva, First and Transdev. No special ticket will be required – passengers simply need to board the bus and make as many trips as they like within West Yorkshire for free.

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

- 3.1 A key aim of the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan is to support the decarbonisation of the local bus network, including delivery of a carbon-zero bus fleet by 2036, as well as encourage more travel by bus and other sustainable modes in order to tackle the climate emergency.

## **4. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 4.1 Key aims of the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan are create a more inclusive, accessible bus service and to better connect communities,

particularly those area of high deprivation, in order to support the region's inclusive growth ambitions.

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

- 5.1 Supporting Equality and Diversity through ensuring the bus service is attractive, inclusive and accessible for all is a key aim of the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- 5.2 The planned public engagement will also prioritise engaging with seldom heard groups and, where possible, obtaining data on protected characteristics from participants, in order to strengthen the insights it provides to support Equality and Diversity.
- 5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and will be reviewed regularly throughout the programme's delivery.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report, but subject to agreement from the DfT, the Combined Authority will receive £69,974,070 in total in revenue funding over the next three years from 2022/2023 to support delivery of its Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- 6.2 The cost of Free Bus Sunday is jointly borne by the Combined Authority and bus companies.

## **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 Committee approves the approach to the spend of the BSIP funding.
- 10.2 That the Transport Committee endorses the intention to seek agreement with operators to deliver these initiatives through the Enhanced Partnership in preparation for submission in draft to the DfT on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.
- 10.3 That the Transport Committee endorses the approach to public engagement to support next steps in development and delivery of the BSIP.

**11. Background Documents**

BSIP Executive Summary

**12. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – BSIP funding award letter