

**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 16 September 2022

**Subject:** **Bus Network Development Plan**

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

**Author:** Thomas Lock, Bus Policy Manager

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 type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

## 1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Transport Committee on development of a bus network vision and implementation plan, which will inform deployment of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding and the Combined Authority's response to ongoing commercial challenges faced by the bus industry.

## 2. Information

### Background

#### Ambitions for an inclusive bus system

- 2.1 Core to the Combined Authority's ambitions, as set out in the West Yorkshire BSIP, is to support a safe and inclusive bus system that better connects communities across the region, particularly those in areas of high deprivation and rural areas. This means supporting bus passengers throughout their end-to-end journeys and meeting people's different travel needs / demands.
- 2.2 The existing network has been shaped by historic travel patterns and has best served the needs of people trying to travel in and out of the region's major urban centres at traditional peak times (7am-9am, 4pm-6pm).

- 2.3 Our ambition for the bus network in the future is for it to better meet people's more complex travel needs, supporting people such as parents and caregivers who travel to different locations / make numerous stops throughout their day's travel or shift workers who need to travel in the early morning or late at night.

#### BSIP commitments

- 2.4 As such, the West Yorkshire BSIP sets out ambitions for delivery of an enhanced and more cohesive bus network – which takes people where they need to go, when they need to go. This included the commitment to develop a 5-year network plan of improvements which will include:

- Expansion of the high frequency 'core network' – so more people live near a bus stop where a service arrives at least every 15 minutes.
- Improvements to the regularity and consistency of less frequent services.
- Increasing services in the early morning, evenings and at night-time.
- Increasing services in rural, out-of-town and economically deprived areas.
- Special high frequency SuperBus services, with cheaper fares and priority on the roads.
- More pilots of demand responsive FlexiBus services.

- 2.5 The BSIP included specific targets for improvements to network frequency by 2025 as set out Table 1.

**Table 1 – BSIP targets for bus network frequency by 2025**

<b>Network</b>	<b>Weekday service hours</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>By 2025</b>
<b>Core</b>	12am-5am	As required	As required
	5am-7am	Every 30 minutes	At least every 15 minutes
	7am-7pm	At least every 15 minutes	At least every 10 minutes
	7pm-9pm	Every 30 minutes	At least every 15 minutes
	9pm-12pm	Every 30 minutes	Every 30 minutes
<b>Other services</b>	12am-5am	As required	As required
	5am-7am	As required	Every 30 minutes

	7am-7pm	Every 20,30,60 minutes	Every 20, 30 minutes
	7pm-9pm	As required	Every 30 minutes
	9pm-12pm	As required	As required

- 2.6 More information is available on the Combined Authority's ambitions for the West Yorkshire bus network is available in section 4.3 of this BSIP.

#### Bus network development plan

- 2.7 As reported at the last meeting of Transport Committee in July 2022, the Combined Authority is now developing the five-year network plan in detail. The approach being undertaken is as follows:

- **Financial Sustainability of the Current Network** - outputs of the Department for Transport (DfT) required review.
- **Gap analysis & priorities for connectivity** - this is a mapping exercise to identify the areas that are currently poorly served by bus at present and to establish priority areas for improvement
- **Establish accessibility standards** – this will establish standards of connectivity for communities upon which to plan the future network. These standards will revise the current criteria for bus service support which determines what service the CA funds
- **Design the aspirational “to be” network** – this will set out the most effective and efficient way of ensuring each community has access to a viable bus service
- **Network Development Plan** – this will set out a five-year plan to work towards delivery of the ‘to be’ network. The first phase will be an implementation plan for deployment of the funding allocated in BSIP.

- 2.8 The plan will ultimately help the Combined Authority to understand its aspirations for the regional bus network. It will also help us shape how we invest the approx. £31m BSIP funding allocated to transform the network and respond to potential service cuts by commercial operators when Bus Recovery Grant funding ends in 2023.

#### Activity update

##### Network funding support

- 2.9 Bus services have been sustained throughout the pandemic by a combination of Government and Local Government funding. A Government condition of Covid funding was to undertake a review, jointly with bus operators, of the financial sustainability of the bus network following the predicted end of Covid

funding in October 2022. This revealed 11% of bus mileage would not be commercially viable when funding ends.

- 2.10 Bus operators subsequently gave notice to the Combined Authority of intended service cuts and reductions when funding ended in October. A total of 100 services would have been affected with 24 routes withdrawn. On 19 August Government announced that funding will be extended for a further six months. Whilst the extended funding has prevented any significant loss of service in October 2022, unless there is a further overall uplift in passenger revenues, the risk to the more marginal routes remain.
- 2.11 It will be necessary to complete the Network Development Plan by the end of the calendar year to shape the programme of service improvements funded by BSIP to ensure they are implemented ahead of the end to Government funding in March 2023. It is also intended to re-procure much of the CA funded bus services within this timescale.

#### Bus connectivity standards and principles

- 2.12 As part of the development of the bus network plan, the Combined Authority is also working to set standards and principles for good bus connectivity / accessibility.
- 2.13 These standards will support revision of the current criteria for bus service support which determines what bus services the Combined Authority funds.
- 2.14 Elements that will be considered include:
- Distance / walking time to bus stop
  - Service frequency
  - Journey time to destination
  - Service changes required to destination
  - Time / day of the week
  - Network type (core or wider networks)
  - Journey speed / congestion
  - Journey time / speed relative to car travel
- 2.15 The standards will be developed further through engagement with stakeholders, including operators and district officers, as well as by public feedback from the Mayor's Big Bus Chat engagement process before being brought to Transport Committee for approval.

#### Gap analysis

- 2.16 Work has also been ongoing to understand and evidence existing bus connectivity across the region.
- 2.17 This data-led work has sought to understand connectivity at different locations across the region via the core and non-core networks; during weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays; and at different hours of the day, including early morning, the AM and PM peaks, and late evenings.

- 2.18 The next stage of this work will seek to identify priority areas for improved bus connectivity by scoring existing bus service provision alongside other factors. Factors may include levels of deprivation; population density and predicted housing growth; employment opportunities; existing local bus patronage and commercial sustainability; local car ownership levels; and connectivity to public services and other modes of public transport.
- 2.19 The key output of this work will be a data-based scoring of the need for improved bus connectivity for all areas across the region and provide evidence for the next stages of the network plan's development.

#### Next steps

- 2.20 External support is being procured to help map and cost the Combined Authority's aspirational 'to be' bus network. This will use the existing commercial network as a basis but radically evolve it where required to deliver the standard of connectivity needed by the region by 2027.
- 2.21 A draft 5-year Network Development Plan including the implementation plan for deploying BSIP funds will be brought to the December meeting of Transport Committee.
- 2.22 SuperBus is a DfT initiative to facilitate localised service improvements jointly funded by LTAs and bus operators. SuperBus proposals were submitted by operators as part of the BSIP development process aimed at improving the commercial viability of currently marginal services through cheaper fares, bus priority and improved branding. Approximately £10m of BSIP is allocated to support SuperBus schemes and it is proposed to advance these schemes for early delivery.
- 2.23 The Enhanced Partnership with bus operators will be the mechanism used to negotiate and seek delivery of the plan.
- 2.24 Table 2 below provides a summary of the next steps required, which will ultimately lead to the first BSIP funded services being operational from April 2023.

**Table 2 – Activity plan for development of the Bus Network Plan**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
July – September 2022	Evidence gathering and gap analysis, development of principles and standards for bus connectivity.
September – November 2022	Further development of the network vision and implementation plan - including stakeholder engagement and review of feedback from The Mayor's Big Bus Chat.

December 2022	Transport Committee to approve the draft network vision and implementation plan.
January – March 2023	Tendering of services and negotiation with operators to agree terms of the corresponding Enhanced Partnership scheme(s).
April 2023	Year 1 of BSIP funding deployed to fund new and enhanced services, and ongoing development of the 5-year network plan.

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

- 3.1 The Bus Network Plan aims to enable greater bus use across the region and reduce private car use, in turn supporting lower carbon emissions and cleaner air quality as part of the Combined Authority's response to the Climate Emergency.

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

- 4.1 The Bus Network Development Plan will seek to protect services to communities, particularly those areas 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 development of the Bus Network Plan specifically will seek to improve equality and diversity by making buses more accessible for all, particularly people living in deprived communities, and providing more social necessary bus connectivity.

### **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 Committee notes the progress made to date on development of the bus network plan and endorses the next steps.

## **11. Background Documents**

The West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (WYCA, 2021) - <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/7471/bus-service-improvement-plan.pdf>

## **12. Appendices**

None