
Report to: Transport & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee

Date: 22 September 2022

Subject: **Bus Service Improvement Plan update**

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1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Transport & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee on the Department for Transport's funding for the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan, delivery of the "Mayor's Fares" proposals and development of a bus network plan.

2. Information

Background

- 2.1 The Combined Authority submitted its Bus Service Improvement Plan to the Department for Transport (DfT) in October 2021. The development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan 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 West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan 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, and caters for the complexity of modern travel patterns and different passengers' needs.
 - **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.

Indicative Bus Service Improvement Plan funding award

- 2.3 In April 2022 the Combined Authority was advised that 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.
- 2.4 As per DfT guidance, the Combined Authority proposed 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.
- 2.5 Other prioritised investments included 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 Bus Service Improvement Plan interventions.
- 2.6 On the 8 August 2022 the Combined Authority received a letter setting out that the £69,974,070 of funding was confirmed subject to a successful statutory consultation on the Bus Service Improvement Plan Enhanced Partnership scheme, which is due to conclude in October 2022. The Combined Authority approved the Enhanced Partnership scheme for consultation at its meeting in July 2022.

Bus Service Improvement Plan assurance

- 2.7 The Bus Service Improvement Plan will be assured through the Assurance Framework. It gained decision point 1 (strategic assessment) approval in January 2022 and work has commenced on developing the Strategic Outline Case (decision point 2). This is due to be approved at the next Combined Authority meeting on 21 October 2022.

Delivery of the Mayor's Fares proposal

- 2.8 As part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan the Combined Authority set out a proposal to reduce the daily cap on the MCard ticket to £4.50 from £5.50 and setting the maximum single day fare to £2. This means passengers will save between 40p - £1.80 per single journey (over £2) and those buying day tickets will save £1 per day.
- 2.9 The Combined Authority meeting on 22 July 2022 resolved that "arrangements to implement the cheaper fares proposal proceed in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of Transport Committee be agreed."
- 2.10 The "Mayor's Fares" were launched on the 4th September 2022. Given the current "cost of living crisis", the Mayor felt that it was important that individuals and families obtained the benefit of this as soon as practically

possible. Also, the start of the academic year is an opportune time to promote new fares as many people review and change travel habits at this time. Examples of the marketing material is provided as Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Examples of Mayor’s Fares promotional material



- 2.11 Whilst the DfT letter provides sufficient confidence to proceed, the grant award and first year payment will not be issued until the Enhanced Partnership has passed through its due process and is in place. This will be late September/ early October. To facilitate an earlier start for the fares initiative, it is proposed that the Combined Authority funds payments to operators between September and November (3 months) from within current revenue budgets until such time as BSIP funding is available. The cost of the first three months of the scheme is estimated at £3m. In the event of any circumstance whereby the BSIP funding does not become available, then the Combined Authority would need to consider whether to terminate or continue the initiative.
- 2.12 Arrangements have been made with bus operators to facilitate the practical steps to implement the new fares and to agree the methodology by which they would be reimbursed from the BSIP funding award. These arrangements will involve making provisional payments in the first three months which are then reviewed for the remainder of the first year. Reimbursement arrangements for the second and subsequent years will be made following a full analysis of the costs and additional revenues generated in year 1.

Development of a bus network plan

- 2.13 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.

- 2.14 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).
- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 As such, the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan sets out ambitions for an enhanced and more cohesive bus network. 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.
- 2.17 The approach being undertaken to develop the plan, as endorsed by Transport Committee at the meeting on 1 July 2022, 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 and deliver the future network. These standards will comprehensively revise the current tendered services criteria for bus service support which determines what services the Combined Authority funds, including a stronger focus on supporting social inclusion and EDI-related outcomes.
 - **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.
- 2.18 The plan will ultimately help the Combined Authority to understand it's 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 (which has support commercial operators maintain services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic) ends in 2023.

Next steps

- 2.19 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 and social inclusion needed by the region by 2027.
- 2.20 The draft five-year Network Development Plan including the implementation plan for deploying BSIP funds will be brought to the December meeting of Transport Committee.
- 2.21 The Enhanced Partnership with bus operators will be the mechanism used to negotiate and seek delivery of the plan.
- 2.22 Table 1, 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 1 – Activity plan for development of the Bus Network Plan

Date	Activity
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 Service Improvement Plan aims to support decarbonisation of the region’s transport network and combat the climate emergency by encouraging more people to travel sustainably on public transport.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1. A key aim of the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan is to create a more inclusive, accessible bus service and to better connect communities
- 4.3 The Bus Network Development Plan will seek to protect services to 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 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken for any actions by the Combined Authority arising from the Bus Network Sustainability Review.

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 & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee notes and comments on the update on the West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan.

11. Background Documents

None.

12. Appendices

None.