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**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 10 February 2023

**Subject:** **The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the Mayor’s Big Bus Chat update**

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**Director:** Dave Pearson, Director Transport Operations and Passenger Experience  
Dave Haskins, Director, Transport Policy and Delivery (Interim)

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

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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 the outcome of the first three months of the Mayor’s Fares initiative and the next steps for development and delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- 1.2 The report also sets out the high-level findings of the Mayor’s Big Bus Chat public engagement to inform ongoing delivery of the BSIP.

## 2. Information

### The Bus Service Improvement Plan

#### Background

- 2.1 The Combined Authority developed its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in 2022, in response to the Government’s National Bus Strategy for England.
- 2.2 Recognising current industry challenges as well as success of the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance to date, the BSIP outlined a vision for a safe and inclusive bus network, which better connects communities across the region and supports decarbonisation and integrated, sustainable travel.

2.3 To enable this, the BSIP set out a plan of interventions at each stage of the passenger journey and 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.

#### Programme overview

2.4 In April 2022, the Combined Authority was notified by the Department for Transport (DfT) that it had been indicatively awarded £69,974,070 in revenue funding, over three financial years, to support delivery of its BSIP. The West Yorkshire was amongst the most successful LTAs in terms of the value of BSIP funding awarded.

2.5 A BSIP funding package, outlined in in Table 1, was agreed by the Combined Authority as the basis for its spending submission to the DfT and development of the corresponding Enhanced Partnership scheme which secured agreement between, the Combined Authority, bus operators and district councils to delivery of the associated projects - as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 1 – BSIP revenue funding package overview**

<b>Funding area</b>	<b>Schemes and interventions</b>	<b>Revenue cost (£m)</b>
<b>Clear and simple fares</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Mayors Fares’ subsidy.</li> <li>• Business to customer sales and marketing.</li> <li>• Business to business sales.</li> </ul>	36.9
<b>New and improved services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evolution and growth of the bus network.</li> <li>• ‘Superbus’ town network enhancements.</li> <li>• Service innovation – Demand Responsive Transport and Mobility Hubs.</li> </ul>	30.9
<b>Supporting bus priority and safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to coordination of bus, urban traffic and passenger information.</li> <li>• Enhanced Safer Travel Partnership with the WY police.</li> </ul>	2.05

<b>Total revenue costs:</b>	69.8
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**Table 2 – BSIP Enhanced Partnership Scheme Commitments**

<b>BSIP EP Scheme Commitments (as of November 2022)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Mayor’s Fares” – capping single fares at £2 max single fare and day fares at £4.50 (multi operator MCard DaySaver)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business to business (B2B) sales through TPN Team</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fares and Ticketing Communications and Marketing campaigns</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network Enhancements – Five Year Network Development Plan, including potential sites for Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Superbus” – partnership schemes with bus operators</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to address issues affecting bus and urban traffic management and its interface with provision of passenger information</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility Hubs (Phases 1 and 2)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of Passenger Charter</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced Safer Travel Partnership with WY Police, including PCSO recruitment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRSTS Bus Priority and related bus infrastructure</li> </ul>

2.6 A Strategic Outline Case was submitted to the Combined Authority seeking approval of £16,823,176 from the £69,974,070 BSIP revenue funds. This was approved by Transport Committee in November 2022, and spend commenced following receipt of funds from the DfT.

2.7 The BSIP vision is also supported by other funding programme’s including elements of the £1bn West Yorkshire Transport Fund, the £830m City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement and, as of January 2023, the £41.25m Levelling Up Fund award.

**Mayor’s Fares update**

2.8 As part of the BSIP, the Combined Authority set out a proposal to reduce the multi operator day ticket (MCard DaySaver) to £4.50 from £5.50 and setting the maximum single journey fare to £2. The Combined Authority meeting on 22 July resolved that ‘arrangements to implement the cheaper fares proposal proceed in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of Transport Committee be agreed.’

2.9 Accordingly, the ‘Mayor’s Fares’ were launched on the 4 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.

2.10 Analysis has been undertaken of the first three full months performance of the Mayor's Fares capped fare scheme, October to December 2022 (September was a part month for which we have incomplete data therefore we have not included this in the analysis)

2.11 The following summarises the benefits to date:

- 7.2 million customer journeys were made using the Mayor's Fares - approaching half a million passenger journeys each week
- Passengers have saved a total of £3.6m compared to what they would have been paying without the initiative- on average each passenger is saving 20%
- The passenger savings have been funded by £3.4m of BSIP funding. Monthly payments have been made to bus operators based on estimates, payment rates will be adjusted based on performance in the first three months
- Over a third of all subsidised journeys have been made on MCard DaySaver tickets which have shown a marked increase in sales

2.12 Bus use in West Yorkshire in May 2022 was at 81% of pre pandemic levels, by December this had increased to 87% showing growth since Mayor's Fares was introduced. However, this increase is in step with a similar increase nationally (outside London) where only West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside have £2 fare capping. It is premature to attribute all of this growth to Mayor's Fares although it is clearly having a beneficial effect.

### **New and Improved Bus Services – Delivery Challenges**

2.13 The accompanying report sets out the financial challenges which are faced by the Combined Authority and bus operators at present. The report identifies the risk that bus operators will withdraw services when funding ends in March and that the Combined Authority's funding position will limit scope to intervene to save services. In the context of this, the first step in delivering the BSIP New and Improved Services funding may need to focus on the communities adversely affected by cuts seeking to stabilise the network.

### **The Mayor's Big Bus Chat**

#### **Background**

2.14 The Mayor's Big Bus Chat was conducted over summer 2022 (between 11<sup>th</sup> July – 18<sup>th</sup> September) to engage the public on the content of the BSIP, as well as their current attitudes towards bus travel more generally.

2.15 The engagement sought public feedback of key topics including the BSIP's five main delivery areas, including:

- The bus network.
- Fares and ticketing
- Customer services and information

- Green and better vehicles
- Bus priority
- Current attitudes towards bus travel
- Personal characteristics

2.16 The engagement consisted of:

- A survey – including closed and open questions
- 14 in-person ‘drop in’ sessions at locations region-wide.
- Six ‘Tell Tracy’ community engagement events
- Two online ‘drop in’ webinars
- Seven social media polls
- Online engagement via YourVoice – including Q&As, video stories and Letters.

2.17 Approximately, over 5000 people were engaged with across all the activities.

Key survey results.

2.18 Following analysis, initial findings from the survey responses are now available.

2.19 The survey had a total of 1,799 respondents. Around 87% of respondents use the bus frequently (at least once every 3 months), and the most popular reason for travelling was for leisure purposes (58%) and then commuting (47%). Over-25's and white respondents were over-represented, as a proportion of their make-up of the overall West Yorkshire population. The largest district response level was from Leeds.

2.20 This level of engagement means that the findings can be taken as statistically representative but must be viewed within the context of the engagement conducted. Specific points to note include:

- **Arriva bus strikes** – industrial action took place throughout the summer, particularly affecting bus users in Kirklees and Wakefield.
- **Pre-Mayor’s fares** - the capped fare scheme was not introduced and /or promoted until near the end of the engagement.
- **School summer holidays** – formed a significant part of the engagement period, which limited opportunities to engage with students and people in education.

2.21 Ultimately, the survey results validate the content of the existing BSIP, with the majority of bus users agreeing that the priorities in the BSIP will help to achieve a better bus network.

2.22 Access to the bus network was a positive with the majority of respondents indicating there is a bus stop within walking distance from their home

2.23 Bus users also mentioned that boarding and interacting with the driver worked well for them.

2.24 However, over half of respondents said they were not satisfied with their local bus service and a number of areas of improvement were highlighted:

- Managing disruptions or delays
- Bus fares aren't good value for money
- Better passenger experience at the bus stop

2.25 Top priorities for investment were improving the frequency of existing daytime services (45%), protecting existing services at risk of being withdrawn (34%), and more evening services between 6pm-10pm (30%).

2.26 74% of respondents agreed that buses should be given more priority on the road network.

The Combined Authority's response.

2.27 The below table outlines the Combined Authority's response to the initial findings from the survey, specifically investments it is making that should help address concerns raised by respondents.

**Table 3 – Combined Authority actions in response to initial findings from the Mayor's Big Bus Chat survey.**

<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Combined Authority actions</b>
Availability of bus services	Development of the five-year Bus Network Plan and investment of £31m approx. BSIP funding in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New and improved services</li> <li>• 'SuperBus' schemes</li> <li>• Service Innovation (such as 'FlexiBus' Demand Responsive Transport).</li> </ul>
Value for money fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £37m approx. investment in 'Mayor's Fares' subsidy, capping all single fares a £2 and day tickets at £4.50.</li> <li>• £1.9m approx. investment via CRSTS in technology to support London style 'tap and go' ticketing and further enhancements to the MCard Mobile app.</li> </ul>
Passenger experience at the bus stop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. £14.3m capital investment via CRSTS in bus stop, shelter and station safety and accessibility upgrades.</li> <li>• Enhanced Safer Travel Partnership with the West Yorkshire Police, including PCSO recruitment.</li> </ul>
Managing disruptions and delays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a collective approach to reducing congestion and improving bus journey times through the Enhanced Partnership</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure travel information on disruption and delays is consistent and delivered across all information media</li> <li>• Improve the effectiveness of real time passenger information systems, minimising instances of “ghost buses”</li> </ul>
Improving bus journey times and reliability/ bus priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivery of bus priority schemes in development as part of the CRSTS programme.</li> </ul>
Consistent Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish and promote a Customer Charter to ensure passengers obtain a consistent standard of customer service across all of the bus system</li> </ul>

### Next steps

2.28 Work is ongoing to finalise analysis of all feedback from the wider engagement activity - including the drop in meetings and Tell Tracy sessions - and to understand how this correlates to the survey outcomes. The full findings will be published online via the Combined Authority’s website in March.

2.29 The findings of the Big Bus Chat will inform the annual update of the BSIP (due in October 2023) as well as development of project business cases being developed under both the BSIP and CRSTS business cases.

2.30 The findings are also being used to inform a ‘Customer Charter, which is being developed in partnership with Operators and sets out the standard of service anyone should expect when travelling on any bus in West Yorkshire and guarantees around the response they should expect when a service fails to be meet these standards.

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

3.1 There are no climate emergency implications directly arising from this report. Increasing bus use will promote more sustainable travel

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

4.1 The delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan will contribute to the Combined Authority’s inclusive growth objectives.

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

5.1 A key aim of the BSIP is to enable an inclusive bus service, which meets the needs of different communities across West Yorkshire. The Demon

### **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 This report reflects the outcomes of engagement with the public on the BSIP and bus travel more generally.

**10. Recommendations**

10.1 That the Transport Committee notes the early findings from the Mayor's Big Bus Chat survey and the progress being made on delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

**11. Background Documents**

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

**12. Appendices**

None