

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 16 March 2018

Subject: **Bus Strategy Update**

Director: Dave Pearson, Director of Transport Services

Author(s): Dave Pearson

Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" 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:	

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress in delivering the Combined Authority's Bus Strategy 2040.

2 Information

- 2.1 The Combined Authority adopted the Bus Strategy 2014 in August 2017 following extensive consultation.
- 2.2 The Strategy seeks to create a modern, integrated and innovative bus system, which puts customers first and contributes to the delivery of the economic, environmental and quality of life ambitions as set out in the Strategic Economic Plan and the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy.
- 2.3 The Bus Strategy sets out actions in the following areas to address the feedback emerging from the Combined Authority's consultation;
- Your customer experience
 - Your bus journey
 - Paying for travel
 - Planning your journey

- The environment
- Accessibility

Performance Management

- 2.4 The Bus Strategy seeks to grow the number of bus passengers in the region by 25% over the next ten years against a background of national decline in patronage. In December 2017, the Department for Transport issued its latest statistical report on bus services in the UK that demonstrates continuing decline in bus use. The Bus Strategy is seeking to reverse this trend.
- 150 million bus passenger journeys were made in West Yorkshire in 2016/17.
 - Patronage in our region is falling in line with other parts of the UK.
 - Since 2004/5 bus patronage has fallen by 6% in our region compared with 8% across all metropolitan areas in England excluding London.
- 2.5 The DfT statistics also revealed that the number of miles operated by buses in West Yorkshire has reduced by 9.4% since 2014/15. Whilst this reduction is in line with the national trend and is less than in neighbouring conurbations it illustrates a reducing availability of service.
- 2.6 Results are awaited in early March from the 2017 Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey that includes 15,000 interviews with bus passengers across the region. In 2016, 82% of respondents were happy with their bus service with 57% happy with value for money and 67% satisfied with punctuality. In the Combined Authority's 2017 Tracker Survey overall satisfaction with bus services dropped slightly from 7.2 to 6.9; in this survey 7.0 is the benchmark for customer satisfaction. Increasing the positive responses from such market research is a key outcome from the Bus Strategy.
- 2.7 Punctuality and reliability is the most important element of the service for customers. Data from the realtime information system is being used both to measure performance and to inform and direct improvements. From January 2018, bus operators and the Combined Authority have been measuring bus punctuality performance and will publish a quarterly update which will be reported to the Committee. A full report on the Bus Strategy performance framework will be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

Bus Services Act

- 2.8 The Combined Authority is making progress to implement its Bus Strategy through the informal partnership arrangements pending the application of formal powers under the Bus Services Act which was enacted in May 2017. The Act enables formal partnerships between Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and Bus Companies together with powers to adopt franchising. In November 2017, the Secretary of State issued guidance on the use of the powers contained in the Bus Services Act. A detailed assessment of the DfT

guidance is underway and a paper will be presented to the Committee setting out the options available.

- 2.9 The Act provides mayoral LTAs direct access to powers to franchise local bus services. The Combined Authority is not a mayoral authority and would need to make application to the Secretary of State should it seek to progress towards franchising. The details of the process and criteria to be adopted by the Secretary of State are awaited. Following a discussion at the Leeds City Council meeting in January, the Council resolved to write to the Secretary of State advising that the Authority is seeking to progress franchising powers.
- 2.10 A business case for franchise powers would need to demonstrate that the alternative options have been considered including the partnership provisions available in the Act. This report sets out progress to date in addressing the short term actions needed to deliver the bus strategy under an informal arrangement entitled Bus 18 pending a decision on the adoption of formal partnership provisions.

Bus 18

- 2.11 The Bus 18 initiative was developed with bus operators to deliver immediate actions to implement the Strategy by the end of 2018. The Bus 18 initiative was formally launched in Bradford on 24 March 2017 when the Combined Authority and the bus operators made the following pledges to address issues which are important to passengers:
- **To make buses easy to use**, we will develop a simpler bus network with fewer changes, more reliable services, smarter information and more ways to pay in advance.
 - **To reduce emissions**, we will introduce more environmentally friendly buses with less emissions to improve air quality.
 - **To improve customer satisfaction and passenger experience**, we will agree a customer promise to increase satisfaction with bus travel and engage with young people to understand what is needed to make buses more useful to them.
- 2.12 The following progress was made in 2017 on the Bus 18 themes:
- **Ticketing** - a Day Saver smart ticket has been launched which enables customers to buy travel by the day (a “carnet”) which particularly helps part time workers. The MCard android phone app is now available enabling customers to top up their smartcard.
 - **Network Stability** - an agreement has been made with bus operators to consult on major bus route changes and to limit changes to six times of the year
 - **Young People** - engagement with Leeds and Bradford Youth Parliaments has informed the development of young people’s ticketing initiatives

- **Air Quality** - buses in West Yorkshire now display an Eco Star rating which identifies their environmental performance. Fleet replacement plans are being agreed with operators
- **Punctuality and Reliability** - a £1m programme of work to address locations on the highway which impact on bus “punctuality (“hotspots”) is now in progress. An update is available on this agenda.
- **Customer Service** - any customers not happy with their bus journey can claim a free travel voucher from the major bus operators. Customers can call a taxi and claim the cost back from either First, Arriva or Transdev if their last bus doesn't arrive within 20 minutes of the scheduled time.
- **Information** - WYCA and bus operators have collaborated on a new design for bus stop information which is being rolled out from February 2018.

2.13 In November 2017 the Combined Authority Transport Committee adopted the following priorities for the Bus 18 initiative

- **Young People** - a strongly promoted, discounted “go anywhere” day ticket
- **Air Quality** - to maximise the funding opportunities provided by central government to facilitate low emission buses
- **Punctuality and Reliability** - a strong focus on punctuality and reliability with clear visibility of performance against targets
- **Customer Confidence** - a campaign to increase public awareness of the recent investment in buses and the steps taken to increase patronage

2.14 Progress has been made on the priorities as follows

- **Young People** - arrangements have been made to ensure young people under 16 can take advantage of concessionary fares when wearing school uniform. Plans are being made to launch a new “go anywhere” ticket in the summer holidays aimed at young people who occasionally use the bus. It is proposed to simplify the eligibility passes and ticket products aimed at people under 25. This will be reported back to Transport Committee as part of a review of the young people's Concessionary Travel scheme.
- **Air Quality** - as reported elsewhere on this agenda, the Combined Authority and Leeds City Council were successful in securing a grant of £4.1 million to upgrade mid-life buses to meet the air quality standards that will become required under Clean Air Zones.
- **Punctuality and Reliability** - bus operators and the Combined Authority have agreed a punctuality monitoring scheme effective from January 2018 which will involve periodic reporting of performance against targets – the first quarter report will be provided to the next meeting of the Committee
- **Customer Confidence** - public relations events have begun to increase public awareness of the recent investment in buses and the steps taken to increase patronage

- 2.15 In order to embed the principles of Bus 18 amongst the staff working to deliver bus services throughout the City Region, a conference was held of key staff in the industry on 26 February. Improving arrangements in times of travel disruption was a key theme of this session. An agreement for bus companies to accept each others' tickets at these times was discussed and enacted two days later during the period of heavy snow.

Punctuality and Reliability - Bus Hotspot Programme Update

- 2.16 Workshops were held with bus operators and highway officers under the Bus 18 initiative to identify a number schemes which would alleviate delays for buses due to traffic congestion. A number of actions by all parties were identified to address the caused of punctuality problems
- 2.17 This work formed the Bus Hotspot 'Punctuality & Reliability' programme of total value £1.037m approved by Transport Committee on 7 July 2017. An update on progress with this programme is provided on a separate item on this agenda.

Beyond Bus 18

- 2.18 A further appraisal of the success of Bus 18 will be presented to the Transport Committee later in the year together with proposals for a more formal partnership under the provisions of the Bus Services Act.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5 Staffing Implications

- 5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

6 External Consultees

- 6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Committee endorses the work to date in implementing the Bus Strategy.
- 7.2 That a further report setting out the performance management framework for the Bus Strategy be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

8 Background Documents

Bus Strategy 2014 and associated documents are available on the following link <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/transport/bus-strategy/>

9 Appendices

None.