

Cabinet

18 January 2023

Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership



Key Decision No. REG/01/2023

Report of Corporate Management Team

Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update Cabinet on the region's Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, provide detail on the required statutory consultation and seek approval from Cabinet to formally sign the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.

Executive Summary

- 2 In October 2021 Cabinet received a report on the National Bus Strategy, Enhanced Partnerships and Bus Service Improvement Plan which detailed the requirements for development an Enhanced Partnership (EP) and produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), that the North East Joint Transport Committee (NEJTC) is responsible for and has the power to make an EP and BSIP.
- 3 In March 2022 Cabinet received a report providing an update on progress with the region's BSIP and EP. The report detailed in October 2021 the NEJTC published a BSIP.
- 4 Since those previous reports, progress has continued with BSIP and EP process in the region:

- (a) in April 2022 Government confirmed indicative funding for the North East BSIP of £163.5 million;
 - (b) draft EP documents along with an updated financial plan have been prepared and liaison on the same taken place with Department for Transport;
 - (c) statutory consultation on the EP documents has been undertaken by Transport North East.
- 5 The final Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme documents are at appendices 2 and 3 respectively. From a passenger perspective the following workstreams will be delivered through the EP:
- (a) bus priority infrastructure such as bus priority lanes and intelligent transport system infrastructure;
 - (b) Park and Ride and Pocket Park and Ride;
 - (c) safety and accessibility bus infrastructure improvements;
 - (d) Bus Service Enhancements;
 - (e) good value fares;
 - (f) customer experience improvements such as improved passenger information.
- 6 It is envisaged that funding for delivery of the BSIP and EP schemes will be released by the Department for Transport following its review of the Enhanced Partnership and any accompanying delivery commitments.

Recommendations

- 7 Cabinet is recommended to:
- (a) note the contents of this report and appendices;
 - (b) note the workstreams for Durham, a summary of which is at paragraph 17, full details are in the EP Scheme appendix 3;
 - (c) agree that Durham County Council can act as signatory to the EP Plan and Scheme, and agree delegated authority for the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships, to sign the document on behalf of the County Council;

- (d) agree delegated authority for the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, in consultation with Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships, to make amendments to the EP Plan and Scheme and associated funding between schemes.

Background

- 8 In October 2021, Cabinet received a report on the National Bus Strategy, Enhanced Partnerships and Bus Service Improvement Plan. The report detailed:
- (a) the requirements for all Local Transport Authorities to commit to working with bus operators to development an Enhanced Partnership and produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan;
 - (b) that in approving its constitution in 2014 the North East Combined Authority had delegated to Durham County Council (and Nexus and NCC) transport functions contained in Parts 4 and 5 of the Transport Act 1985 and Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000 (primarily relating to securing socially necessary bus services, concessionary travel, and ticketing on local passenger transport services). Despite these delegated functions, the overall role of LTA continues to lie with the North East Joint Transport Committee (NEJTC). Therefore, it is NEJTC that is responsible for and has the power to make an EP and BSIP;
 - (c) in June 2021 a NEJTC report relating to governance of the EP proposed that local bus boards be set up to ensure that views of local residents are part of the BSIP and EP process.
- 9 In March, Cabinet received a report providing an update on progress with the region's BSIP and EP. The report detailed:
- (a) in October 2021 the North East Joint Transport Committee published a BSIP. The BSIP set out improvements in a wide range of areas including network coverage, frequencies and fares. The vast majority of improvements were contingent on new funding being made available by Government as part of what was initially announced as a £3 billion national fund for bus improvements;
 - (b) Government had confirmed that funding for BSIPs across the 79 Local Transport Authorities will be limited to £1.4 billion over 3 years. This funding will also need to meet the Government aspirations for Zero Emission Buses.

Progress

10 In April 2022, Government confirmed indicative funding for the North East BSIP of £163.5 million, compared to £803.9 million required to deliver all components as set out in the full North East BSIP document.

11 The confirmation letter stated:

We are pleased to offer you an indicative funding allocation of up to £163,521,172 (of which £73,758,353 capital and £89,762,819 revenue) to commence delivery of your BSIP. This is total funding from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

This letter does not constitute a formal or binding grant offer. Funding confirmation will be conditional on your submission and implementation of a transformational Enhanced Partnership (EP) which includes firmer and more detailed commitments, from the Local Transport Authority (and any other relevant local authorities) and local bus operators, to deliver a package of prioritised and ambitious improvements to bus services, in line with:

- i. your BSIP;*
- ii. the Department's previous feedback on it and commitments made in and after clarification emails; and*
- iii. the guidance provided with this email, such as the prioritisation of bus priority schemes (where relevant) and high profile and impactful interventions that reduce and simplify fares.*

12 On 30 June 2022, draft EP documents along with an updated financial plan were submitted to the Department for Transport for its review. These documents set out which BSIP elements could be delivered within the indicative funding element. The EP documents are in two parts:

- the EP Plan: a clear vision of the improvements to bus services that the EP is aiming to deliver, mirroring the BSIP;
- the EP Scheme: an accompanying document that sets out the requirements that need to be met by local services that stop in the geographical area defined in the EP scheme, to achieve BSIP outcomes.

13 The DfT provided feedback on these documents and there has been frequent dialogue between DfT and all partners of the EP to ensure the

final EP documents will secure the full funding allocation indicated in April 2022.

14 To ensure the public's views shaped the content of the BSIP, people and businesses were encouraged to take part in an engagement campaign, 'the Big Bus Conversation'. The region-wide campaign covered all seven authority areas in August 2021. Through the campaign 2,400 people confirmed they thought the Ten Solutions* set out in the strategic document "Your Vision for Buses" were the right ones to make buses appealing. The following statutory consultation is taking place:

- 13 December to 10 January 2023 operators of qualifying local bus services that operate within or into the geographical area;
- 11 January 2023 to 8 February 2023 statutory consultees:
 - organisations that represent local passengers;
 - other local authorities that would be affected by the proposals;
 - the Traffic Commissioners;
 - the chief officer of police for each area to which the plan relates;
 - Transport Focus;
 - the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA);
 - such other persons as the authority thinks fit.

Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

15 The final Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme documents are at appendices 2 and 3 respectively. In summary, as detailed at point 12a. above, the EP Plan is a clear vision of the improvements to bus services that the EP is aiming to deliver, mirroring the BSIP. The EP Scheme provides details of requirements that need to be delivered to achieve the BSIP outcomes. In summary the EP Scheme details:

- geographical coverage: The administrative areas of the NECA and the NTCA;
- the date the Scheme is made and the scheme will have an initial term of 3 years;

* The Ten Solutions can be found [TNE-BSIP-Nov-25-2.pdf \(transportnortheast.gov.uk\)](#)

- exempted services;
- facilities and measures;
- requirements in respect of local services;
- governance arrangements;
- how the scheme (or elements of it) is reviewed, postponed, varied or revoked;
- funding of network improvements;
- complementary arrangements.

16 The EP Plan and Scheme documents do not easily and clearly set out the passenger benefits, as they are legal documents. From a passenger perspective the following workstreams will be delivered through the EP:

- bus priority infrastructure such as bus priority lanes and intelligent transport system infrastructure;
- Park and Ride and Pocket Park and Ride;
- safety and accessibility bus infrastructure improvements;
- Bus Service Enhancements;
- good value fares;
- customer experience improvements such as improved passenger information.

17 The full details of workstream delivery involving Durham are detailed in the EP Scheme at appendix 3. In summary the main elements for Durham include:

- Bus priority: Measures to improve bus journey time and reliability on the A167 corridor. A consultant's study identified 9 proposals within County Durham, stretching from Bishop Auckland to Chester le Street, and an initial three sites will be progressed:
 - Coundon Gate roundabout;
 - Durham Road/Whitworth Road in Spennymor;
 - B2688/A167 at Croxdale;

- Park and Ride and Pocket Park and Ride (smaller park and ride sites, aligned close to existing commercial bus service routes): Site identification and feasibility work still ongoing;
- Safety and accessibility bus infrastructure improvements:
 - Consett and Peterlee bus station: CCTV, lighting improvements, removal of 'hiding places' etc;
 - Stanley bus station: CCTV, lighting improvements, removal of 'hiding places' etc (if LUF not successful);
 - Millburngate: passenger safety improvements including shelter replacement;
 - 250 shelters that meet the criteria for improvements related to accessibility and safety;
- Bus Service Enhancements: Discussions at County Durham Bus Board have informed bus service enhancements. First phase to include:
 - Enhancements to the network: Includes service 51 Stanhope-Durham;
 - Sunday service enhancements: Stanhope - Tow Law - Crook every 120 mins; (current: none), 65 Durham - Seaham , every 60 mins (current: 120 mins), 56 BA-Ferryhill - W Cornforth -Durham every 60 mins (current every 60 W Cornforth – Durham), 87/108: Toft Hill - BA/BA - Willington, every 120 mins (current none), 57/58 Durham - Kelloe - Cassop/Trimdon - Hartlepool every 120 min (current limited svc 58), Cathedral Bus introduce Sunday buses summer only, park and ride Sunday service Belmont to Durham;
 - Sustaining former commercial network: Former GNE 28/29, 30/31, 730, 208, V5, x 62; Former Arriva 57/57A, 62, 87; Former WMS 84 (Crook local); Former Scarlet Band 111;
 - Access to employment: Hounsgill from Stanley area; Amazon (M-F shift working inc early and late; services from 4 corridors); Team Valley from Stanley area, M-F core work times; NAycliffe from Evenwood/ W Auckland, core M-F work times, Spectrum from Murton, core work times;
 - Demand response transport: Enhanced Link2 capacity.

Additional phase to follow, in discussion with County Durham Local Bus Board.

- Good value fares:
 - Under 22 single £1;
 - Under 22 regionwide day ticket (multi modal) £3;
 - County Durham day ticket (multi operator) £4;
 - Two zone (multi modal) £6.50;
 - Regionwide (multi modal) £6.80.

18 It is envisaged that funding for delivery of the BSIP and EP schemes will be released by the Department for Transport provided as a grant under s.31 of the Local Government Act 2003 following the Department for Transport’s review of the Enhanced Partnership and any accompanying delivery commitments. It is expected there will be a condition to reserve the right to reduce funding (from this or other DfT funding to the authority) if EP or other funded BSIP commitments made by the LTA are not delivered, or the ambition of the EP is reduced significantly.

19 The programme timelines are:

Activity	Date (estimated)
Submit draft EP Plan and Scheme to DfT	30 June 2022 – completed
Comments from DfT on EP	29 July 2022 (received 19 August 2022)
Update and final agreement of EP with DfT	August-November 2022 (received 25 November 2022)
Operator objection period	16 November to 13 December 2022
Statutory consultation	16 December 2022 to 27 January 2023
Enhanced Partnership Established	February 2023
Receipt of funding from DfT	February 2023
Schemes commence	February 2023 onwards

Governance

20 Governance of EP, plan and scheme is set out in section 8 of the EP Scheme at annex 2. In summary a Partnership Board, meeting at least quarterly, will provide governance and the board’s functions may include review of performance against KPIs, review and development of regional initiatives, overseeing the annual BSIP review and refresh etc. The Partnership board will be made up of the following:

- An independent chairperson, who will be agreed in advance of the first meeting of the Partnership Board by the other members,

the arrangements for the chairperson will be in line with the North East Combined Authorities' (NECA) policies for independent chair people, and will be appointed on a yearly basis;

- Managing Director, Transport North East, or the deputy of the managing director in their absence;
- A senior representative of Nexus;
- A Tyne & Wear based officer from the Heads of Transport Highways subgroup;
- A senior representative of Durham and a senior representative of Northumberland;
- A senior representative from Go North East, Stagecoach and Arriva;
- A local representative of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT), to represent other bus operators;
- The chairperson of the Bus Advisory Board;
- Senior representatives from Bus Users UK and Transport Focus.

21 A County Durham Local Bus Board has been established, with the first meeting taking place on 6 December 2021. Meetings will be chaired by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships unless otherwise directed by the Cabinet Member. The ordinary frequency of meetings will be four times per year. Attendance at Board meetings will be by invitation only and is expected to include:

- the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships;
- a representative of each of the County Durham Area Action Partnerships;
- representatives of NEBus, the bus operators' association, encompassing the providers of services across the North East;
- a representative of the Disability Partnership;
- a representative of the Youth Council.

Funding

22 The County Council directly supports a significant element of non-commercial public transport across the County. These services are a

mixture of entire tendered routes and extensions of commercial services into non-commercial time periods ie late evenings. Expenditure exceeds £4.5 million which is funded from fares paid by passengers and a revenue budget allocated to the Council.

- 23 The County Council also provides financial support through a revenue budget for concessionary travel. The Council also has a statutory obligation to reimburse bus operators for journeys made by concessionary bus pass holders for journeys starting in County Durham.
- 24 The County Council also financially supports bus and passenger infrastructure through LTP and other capital funding.
- 25 The indicative funding allocation for delivery of the BSIP schemes will complement and enhance the work delivered through the existing funding for public transport.

Background papers

None

Other useful documents

Cabinet report 13 October 2021

Cabinet report 16 March 2022

[North East Bus Service Improvement Plan - Transport North East](#)

Author(s)

Cathy Knight

Tel: 03000 268512

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The EP follows a statutory framework requiring legal notices and formal agreements. The EP will become legally binding upon the LTAs, LAs and Bus Operators. Specialist legal advice has been sought by Transport North East in support of the development of the EP, particularly, in relation to subsidy control and competition law matters.

Finance

As set out in the report.

Consultation

Consultation that has taken place is detailed in paragraph 14 above.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Failure to act is likely to have a disproportionate effect on the elderly and people with limited mobility who rely on public transport.

Climate Change

Failure to act is likely to increase the number of people travelling by private car.

Human Rights

No impact.

Crime and Disorder

No impact.

Staffing

No impact.

Accommodation

No impact.

Risk

Failure to act is likely to have a negative impact of people's ability to access employment, education and health.

Procurement

Additional services will follow well established procurement methodologies.

Appendix 2: Enhanced Partnership Plan

Attached as separate document.

Appendix 3: Enhanced Partnership Scheme

Attached as separate document.