

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan - Additional Staffing
Report of: Heather Jones, Head of Enhanced Partnerships
Portfolio: Transport

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to request a delegated decision to enable the Chief Executive to approve and sign Grant Funding Agreements (GFAs) with a total value of £663,216.27 for interventions funded by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

The total value requested is for six roles; three roles at Nexus and three roles at the Urban Traffic Management Centre (UTMC) based at Newcastle City Council. These roles will support the effective management and delivery of BSIP enhancements.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to approve:

1. A total of £663,216.27 BSIP spend for the following:
 - a) £35,000 for one Bus Administration Officer based at Nexus to be employed from 20 February 2024 to 19 February 2026.
 - b) £117,000 for one Bus Champion based at Nexus to be employed from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026.
 - c) £45,750 for one Marketing Executive based at Nexus from 15 April 2024 to 14 October 2025.
 - d) £341,988.84 for two Signal Designers based at the UTMC from 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2026, including corporate overheads, management overheads, and accommodation.
 - e) £123,477.42 for one UTMC Technician based at the UTMC from 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2026, including corporate overheads, management overheads, and accommodation.
2. Following approval, the GFAs will be provided to the Chief Executive for signature prior to sealing. Once they have been signed and sealed, the GFAs will be sent to the recipients.

A. Context

1. Background

- 1.1 In April 2022, following a bid for BSIP funding, a total of £163.5 million was allocated to the North East region by the Department for Transport (DfT).
- 1.2 The BSIP sets out a wide range of significant proposed improvements to every aspect of bus services, which we are delivering through the North East Enhanced Partnership, a formal partnership of the North East Combined Authority, bus operators, local authorities and Nexus.

- 1.3 The total allocation was made up of interventions covering 'Customer Experience', 'Fares and Ticketing', 'Highways and Infrastructure', and 'Network Improvements'. A variety of projects have been created under each of these headline interventions.
- 1.4 The BSIP Programme fund allocations were approved by the Joint Transport Committee in June 2022.
- 1.5 On 30 July 2024, the unspent BSIP budget of £60.811 million revenue and £40.468 million capital, was approved at the North East Combined Authority Cabinet and delegated authority was granted to the Chief Executive to enter into the required grant funding agreements to facilitate these interventions. This programme of spend had previously been set out and agreed by the Joint Transport Committee on 19 March 2024.
- 1.6 Each role is essential to delivering the aims and objectives of the BSIP and therefore the wider objectives of the combined authority.

B. Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

The roles recruited through this project will support us in delivering our BSIP and will impact the following objectives of the North East Combined Authority:

Connecting communities – the roles at the UTMC will support the identification of potential improvements to signals at junctions across the region, alongside identifying routes for bus prioritisation. These improvements will reduce bottlenecks and support improved traffic flows for buses, encouraging the move from private to public transport and enhancing the connection between communities.

Improving wellbeing – the roles at Nexus will encourage, through a variety of schemes, modal shift from private to public transport. The impact of this will be a reduction in air pollution, thereby improving wellbeing across the region.

These activities will also enable more people to access education, training and skills by providing cheaper forms of transport, contributing to a successful, vibrant North East.

C. Key risks

The main risk of this work is that the roles do not deliver what is expected and required. This would have an impact on the aims and expected benefits of the BSIP.

In order to mitigate this risk, the GFAs will reference the objectives of the roles and the Enhanced Partnership will require both organisations, Nexus and UTMC, to submit written reports with their quarterly claims, detailing the activity undertaken by each role. If we have concerns that any of the roles are not being used for the purpose outlined in the job description, we will withhold funding and work with the partner organisation to rectify the issue.

D. Financial and other resources implications

The funding for these staffing interventions is being drawn from the BSIP grant funding, which has already been received by the North East Combined Authority and held for the purpose of delivering the aims and expected benefits of the BSIP. Approval for allocation of the funding has been given by the North East Joint Transport Committee and the North East CA Cabinet, and the grant funding agreements are in line with these decisions. There are no other financial implications for the North East Combined Authority.

E. Legal implications

The legal implications have been considered by retained specialists in bus legislation, DLA Piper. DLA Piper confirm that the use of BSIP funds for the purposes stated above is not a subsidy as it involves funds from one public body going to another public body.

The roles at Nexus are to support delivery of their functions as a Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) and therefore there is no subsidy. The roles at the UTMC, where staff are employees of Newcastle City Council to provide this service to the region, are also covered by this and are therefore not a subsidy.

F. Equalities implications

The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. In June 2024 the North East CA adopted equality objectives to reflect the different roles of the Combined Authority as an employer, a commissioner and deliverer of services, and a civic leader.

In relation to this project, the hiring processes for each role are in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

G. Consultation and engagement

No specific consultation was undertaken for these roles however they are aligned with requirements for delivering the BSIP which were reaffirmed by members of the Enhanced Partnership during the BSIP refresh in June 2024.

H. Appendices

None

I. Background papers

The BSIP is available on the North East Combined Authority website [Bus Service Improvement Plan Schemes \(northeast-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/bsip)

National Bus Strategy [bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf)

J. Contact officers

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K. Glossary

- BSIP – Bus Service Improvement Plan
- GFA – Grant Funding Agreement
- LTA – Local Transport Authority
- UTMC – Urban Traffic Management Centre

L. Sign-off

1) Cabinet Member: Yes	2) Director/Head of Service: Yes	3) Director of Finance and Investment: Yes	4) Monitoring Officer: Yes
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