

Title	Bus Service Improvement Plan: Safe and Accessible Bus Stops and Stations.
Report of:	Head of Transport Programmes & Head of Enhanced Partnerships
Portfolio:	Transport

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek the enactment of the delegation provided to the Chief Executive at the July meeting of the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) Cabinet to enter into the relevant agreements as required, in accordance with the Single Assurance Framework. This Delegated Decision is specifically to approve the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Safe and Accessible Bus Stations Programme Business Case (PBC) and to enable payment of funding and the establishment of Grant Funding Agreements.

Recommendations

In line with the delegation provided at the July meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, the Chief Executive is recommended to-

- Approve the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Station programme business case.
- Approve the release of £556,000 of development funding to assist scheme promoters with the continued development of their scheme.

A. Context

- 1.1 The North East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is the region's response to the Government's National Bus Strategy for England which was initially published in March 2021 and has subsequently been refreshed on an annual basis. Within the Plan, a clear ambition has been set to upgrade bus stations to ensure that they have modern facilities to increase safety and to ensure accessibility is of the highest standard.
- 1.2 At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members approved and made the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EP) and Scheme which set out through a statutory partnership, how Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators will work together to deliver our BSIP outcomes which included improving safety and accessibility of bus infrastructure. This approval unlocked confirmed funding to enable BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be delivered.
- 1.3 In March 2024, a separate report went to JTC in which Members approved in principle, the remaining unallocated BSIP capital totalling £40.468million to several identified sub-programmes which align to the refreshed BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. This included £5million identified for Safe and Accessible Stops and Stations.
- 1.4 At the July Meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, Members approved delegated authority to the Chief Executive, to enter into the relevant agreements as required up to £40.468 million of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding to deliver a range of capital improvements to bus services, to be delivered by partners through Grant Funding Agreements.

- 1.5 We are now in a position to bring forward the Safe and Accessible Bus Stations Programme Business Case for approval which sets out 5 schemes which align to the BSIP ambition. This report provides an overview of the PBC and recommends that the Chief Executive exercises the delegated authority to approve this PBC and all other activities highlighted in the recommendations section above.

2. Programme Overview

- 2.1 BSIP's Safe and Accessible Bus Stations sub programme is one component of the overall capital programme and will deliver a set of key improvements aimed at improving safety and accessibility at the following bus stations within the region-
- Alnwick Bus Station (Northumberland)
 - Durham Millburngate (Durham City Centre)
 - Consett Bus Station
 - Peterlee Bus Station
 - Stanley Bus Station
- 2.2 These five schemes align to the BSIP's overarching objectives and are all able to be delivered within the overall programme timeframes. The Value for Money statement included within the programme business case demonstrates that the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stations sub-programme generates 'Very High Value for Money' with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 4.76.
- 2.3 Key improvements include improved lighting, CCTV, information, anti-social behaviour deterrents, and improved accessibility to the bus stations; all of which will support increased customer satisfaction and increased bus patronage.

3. Governance and Assurance

- 3.1 The PBC has been developed in line with the requirements of the Single Assurance Framework which has included being reviewed by an independent consultant retained by the North East Combined Authority to ensure the following:
- the level of analysis undertaken by the scheme promoter is appropriate to the size of the scheme;
 - the scheme gives good value for public money;
 - the risks associated with delivery of the scheme have been identified and where possible mitigated; and
 - the appropriate governance and procurement processes are in place to complete the scheme in-line with DfT's grant funding conditions.
- 3.2 The independent review identified no fundamental issues to scheme delivery or viability. This provides comfort that proposals are sufficiently developed and pose limited delivery risk.
- 3.3 In line with the Single Assurance Framework, schemes within the Safe and Accessible Bus Station sub-programme will be required to go through individual scheme level assurance inclusive of detailed consultation, Cabinet approval and S151 sign off from the Local Authority proposing the scheme prior to individual level scheme sign off.

B. Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

BSIP and its programme of activity supports the strategic aspirations of the North East CA, as detailed in the North East Devolution Deal signed in December 2022 and the Deeper Devolution Deal agreed at the June meeting of the North East CA Cabinet.

The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of this BSIP sub-programme includes improving the attractiveness of bus infrastructure, providing a safe, public transport system, giving people more choice about how they can best make their journey as well as improving accessibility by ensuring that the needs of all users are considered.

C. Key risks

Approval and agreement of the proposals outlined within this report aid in the delivery of the BSIP sub- programme as there would, otherwise, be a risk of delay in delivering these key interventions within the overall programme timescales.

D. Financial and other resources implications

The total amount of funding associated with this delegated decision report is sub-programme is £556,000 to continue with the development of these schemes including detailed designs and costings which will be compiled into an Assurance Statement. This funding will be fully defrayed by the end of this financial year.

A further Delegated Decision will be progressed through North East CA's assurance processes and submitted once all scheme Assurance Statements have been finalised (which will include a full financial profile) to release the remaining sub-programme funding.

E. Legal implications

Grant Funding Agreements (GFA) for development funding have been prepared, which minimises risk should a given proposal fail to come forward for delivery post award of development funds. Ongoing management through the GFA will ensure that legal risks are appropriately managed throughout delivery.

F. Equalities implications:

Through the development of the PBC, individual audit reports were produced for each scheme to highlight key safety and accessibility issues which needed resolved. Scheme specific action plans will be prepared to ensure that all identified benefits can be achieved whilst any potential dis-benefits can be mitigated.

G. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP programme and this sub-programme has been consulted on and considered through Heads of Transport of the LA7 constituent authorities and at the March 2024 meeting of the Joint Transport Committee. The BSIP capital programme investment was approved at the July meeting of the North East CA Cabinet. Schemes included within the proposed BSIP sub programme, will be subject to local approval, consultation and onwards approval in line with the processes outlined within the agreed Single Assurance Framework. Scheme promoters are responsible for undertaking consultation pertaining to each individual scheme over the course of scheme development.

H. Background papers

[North East Combined Authority Cabinet Meeting July 2024](#)

I. Contact officers.

Jonathan Bailes, Head of Transport Programmes
jonathan.bailes@northeast-ca.gov.uk

Heather Jones- Head of Enhanced Partnerships
Heather.jones@northeast-ca.gov.uk

J. Glossary

North East CA	North East Combined Authority
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan
JTC	Joint Transport Committee
DfT	Department for Transport
PBC	Programme Business Case