

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan – Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Sub-Programme
Report of: Head of Transport Programmes
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 2024 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: £60.811 million (revenue) and £40.468 million (capital) of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding to deliver a range of improvements to bus services, to be delivered by partners through Grant Funding Agreements.

This Delegated Decision report specifically approves the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme Business Case, which has a total programme value of £3,307,379 and enables payment of funding and the establishment of Grant Funding Agreements with scheme promoters to deliver the Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme.

Recommendations

- i. In line with the delegation provided at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, the Chief Executive in agreement with the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer and in consultation with the Mayor and the relevant Cabinet Member is recommended to:
 - Approve the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stop Programme Business Case which has a total programme value of £3,307,379, and
 - Enable the payment of funding and the establishment of Grant Funding Agreements.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

1. Background

- 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. The BSIP set out a clear ambition to upgrade bus stations and stops to ensure that facilities are in line with modern standards, to increase safety and to ensure accessibility is of the highest standard.
- 1.2 At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members approved a funding award of £163.5m of BSIP funding, of which £73.758m was allocated for capital delivery. At the same meeting the JTC made the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme which set out through a statutory partnership, how Local Transport Authorities and local bus operators will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes which included improving the safety and accessibility of bus infrastructure. This approval confirmed funding allocations to enable BSIP Key Performance Indicators to be delivered.
- 1.3 In July 2023, JTC Members approved £33.29m of BSIP capital funding for investment in Bus Priority Infrastructure and Intelligent Transport Systems. In March 2024, JTC Members approved and allocated the remaining unallocated BSIP capital funding totalling £40.468m to several sub-programmes which align to the refreshed BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. This included an indicative allocation for a Safe and Accessible Stops sub-programme.

1.4 At the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, Members re-confirmed the decisions previously made by JTC and delegated authority to the Chief Executive, to enter into the relevant agreements for up to £40.468m of BSIP capital funding.

2. The Investment Proposal

2.1 The BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stops sub-programme will deliver a set of key upgrades aimed at improving safety and accessibility at approx. 653 identified bus stops across the region. Interventions include:

- New bus stops and shelters
- Improved pedestrian access to bus stops
- Improved information including Passenger Information Displays (PIDs), where feasible
- Improved safety features

2.2 A programme level five-part business case has been produced outlining a package of interventions which can be delivered by March 2026, provides value for money, and meets the overarching objectives of the BSIP.

2.3 Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	24/25	Total
New bus stops/shelters	148	148
Upgraded Bus stops	11	11
New bus stop flag	524	524
New bus stop seating	24	24
New static timetable information	30	30
Raised kerb installations	117	117

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Improved customer satisfaction	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in Monitoring and Evaluation)
Improved safety and security	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in Monitoring and Evaluation)

2.4 Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Individual Scheme Assurance Statements	February 2025
Grant funding Agreements	March 2025
Delivery Commences	March 2025
Delivery Completion	March 2026

2.5 Evaluation

Evaluation will be undertaken by each of the 3 scheme promoters; a monitoring and evaluation plan will be produced within each assurance statement and will be verified and assured by independent consultants.

2.6 Appraisal

Independent appraisal identified no fundamental issues to programme delivery or viability. This provides comfort that proposals are sufficiently developed and pose limited delivery risk.

The Value for Money statement included within the Programme Business Case demonstrates that the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus stops sub-programme generates 'High Value for Money' with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.13.

Schemes that sit within the Safe and Accessible Bus Stops 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 and further independent appraisal prior to individual level scheme sign off.

2.7 RAG Assessment

The Programme Business Case has been assured by specialist independent appraisers who have provided the following summary.

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic case	Green
	Commercial case	Amber
	Economic case	Green
	Financial case	Amber
	Management case	Green
	Overall rating	Green

Areas which have been rated as Amber are those which cannot be finalised until the individual scheme promoter Assurance Statements have been produced. These statements will be independently assessed prior to approval and the agreement of the Grant Funding Agreements (GFAs).

2.8 Recommended Conditions of Funding

The award of funding would be subject to the following proposed funding conditions:

No.	Condition
1.	All funding must be defrayed by March 2026
2.	All funding can only be spent on scheme deliverables set out in the individual Scheme Assurance Statement.

B. Potential 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 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet. The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of this BSIP sub-programme include 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

The key risk associated with this report is the ability of scheme promoters to defray BSIP capital expenditure within the overall BSIP programme timescales required by the Department for Transport (March 2026). Approval and agreement of the proposals outlined within this report aid in the delivery of interventions within the required timescales.

D. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the programme is outlined below:

Funding source- BSIP Capital	2024/25	2025/26	Total
<i>Durham County Council</i>	£188,501	£1,696,512	£1,885,013
<i>Nexus</i>	£110,427	£993,845	£1,104,272
<i>Northumberland County Council</i>	£31,800	£286,294	£318,094
Total (£)	£330,728	£2,976,651	£3,307,379

Status of match funding:

No match funding is required for BSIP.

Funding availability:

The funding which has been identified in this report is fully allocated and has previously been committed to this sub-programme by the Joint Transport Committee and was re-confirmed by North East CA Cabinet in July 2024.

The criteria for site selection within the Programme Business Case focused on essential safety, accessibility, and security enhancements in line with BSIP eligibility criteria and objectives. Funding allocations are reflective of the asks put forward by each delivery partner considering the need to focus on safety, accessibility, and security. In the case of Northumberland County Council, largely bus stops are owned by Parish and Town councils. Northumberland County Council working in partnership submitted a list of interventions on behalf of Parish and Town councils.

Through the forthcoming City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme, £3.5 million of capital investment has been indicatively allocated to further improve the region's bus stop estate. The flexibility of CRSTS spending criteria lends itself to leverage funding for sites which were unable to come forward through BSIP funding.

E. Legal implications

GFAs are being developed, prepared, and will be approved by Newcastle City Council Legal for onwards agreement with scheme promoters. GFAs will minimise any legal risks and ensure the North East CAs obligations to the Department for Transport in regards to BSIP funding are met, these obligations will be appropriately transferred to each scheme promoter through the GFA. Clear roles and responsibilities have been established concerning the design and development of proposed infrastructure, including ensuring compliance with Health and Safety and CDM regulations.

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. Through the development of the Business Case, individual audit reports were produced for each scheme to highlight key safety and accessibility issues which will be resolved by the installation of infrastructure. Scheme specific action

plans will be prepared to ensure that all identified benefits can be achieved whilst any potential dis-benefits are mitigated.

G. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP programme and the Safe and Accessible Bus Stops sub-programme have been consulted on and considered through Heads of Transport of the seven constituent authorities and at the March 2024 meeting of the Joint Transport Committee. BSIP capital funding was approved and allocated at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet. Schemes included within the Safe and Accessible Bus Stops sub-programme will be subject to local approval, consultation and onwards approval. Scheme promoters are responsible for undertaking consultation pertaining to each individual scheme over the course of scheme development.

H. Appendices

None

I. Background papers

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

J. Contact officers

Name: Jonathan Bailes

Title: Head of Funding and Programmes

Email address: Jonathan.bailes@northeast-ca.gov.uk

K. Glossary

North East CA- North East Combined Authority

BSIP- Bus Service Improvement Plan

JTC- Joint Transport Committee

L. Consultee

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes