

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Passenger Information Display Programme
Report of: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport
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 specifically seeks approval of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Passenger Information Displays Business Case, which has a total project value of £3.5 million and enables payment of funding and the establishment of a Grant Funding Agreement with the respective scheme promoter to deliver this project. The report was considered by Technical Officers Group and Finance and Investment Board on 3 February 2025 and 17 February 2025 respectively; and was recommended for approval.

Recommendations

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 Director of Finance and Investment and in consultation with the Mayor and the relevant Cabinet Member, is recommended to:

- Approve the BSIP Passenger Information Displays Business Case which has a total project value of £3.5million.
- Enable the payment of funding and the establishment of a Grant Funding Agreement.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

Project Outline	
Funding Source	Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme
Proposal Name	BSIP Passenger Information Displays project
Lead Organisation	Newcastle City Council
Delivery Areas	Across North East Combined Authority footprint
Start Date	1 st April 2025
Financial End Date	30 th March 2026
Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved)	December 2025
Total Project Value	£3.5 million
Grant Amount Requested	£3.5 million
Budget Implications	The requested grant can be met within the overall BSIP capital budget.

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 improve real time passenger information by moving to a next generation system.
- 1.2 At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members approved a funding award of £163.5m of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, of which £73.75m was allocated for capital delivery. At the same meeting the JTC 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 BSIP outcomes which included improving information provision. This approval confirmed funding allocations to enable BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 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.
- 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

The BSIP Passenger Information Displays (PIDs) project will see the delivery and replacement of 398 Passenger Information Displays across the region aimed at providing the next generation of Real Time Information (RTI) to bus users. The PIDs are located on 23 key bus corridors across the region, which are shown in the map provided in Appendix A. These corridors are the same corridors which have received separate investment to upgrade traffic signals, allowing enhanced connectivity to the region's Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) centre. Fundamentally, it will enable the newly installed PIDs to receive bus location data at a higher frequency and greater precision therefore improving the performance of the PIDs and the information provided to bus users across the region will be more accurate. This will mean a real reduction in wait times at bus stops for users, which in turn will enable users to make better choices about their journey.

Additionally, the data will also flow via the UTMC into a new website and app which is being progressed through the BSIP revenue programme. This will enable customers to plan their journey in advance and inform their choice before they get to the bus stop.

Research has shown that bus reliability is the second biggest barrier to bus travel, and that the provision of real time passenger information to passengers is considered to be a key factor in improving passenger confidence in being able to reach their destination and therefore in retaining existing passengers and attracting new ones.

This project is part of a wider Intelligent Transport System (ITS) Programme that is currently in delivery and is focused on providing traffic signals the ability to prioritise late running buses. Coupled with back-office improvements, these will significantly improve network management across the region by allowing for a more streamlined process in terms of disseminating accurate real time passenger information to bus users while improving bus reliability and punctuality.

Existing PIDs along the corridors that can be recycled and have some valuable remaining life expectancy will be relocated predominantly along key bus corridors. In addition to these corridors, a number of signs will be relocated to rural areas that have never benefited from RTI to enhance the current network coverage.

A fully compliant five-part business case has been produced which confirms that this project can be fully delivered by March 2026, provides value for money, and meets the overarching objectives of the BSIP, the Local Transport Plan, and the wider North East CA priorities.

Newcastle City Council have acted as the lead authority for the five Tyne and Wear local authority partners since 2017 when the first Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) system was purchased; this has now been expanded to also operate within Northumberland. In addition, Newcastle also hosts the Regional Traffic Signals Team who deliver the wider ITS programme. As such Newcastle City Council will act as scheme promoter on behalf of the region for the delivery of the Passenger Information Displays Project. Newcastle City Council have confirmed that there are onward agreements with Nexus (on behalf of the Tyne and Wear authorities), Durham and Northumberland via grant funding agreements to deliver the works on the ground.

2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	24/25	25/26	Total
New Passenger Information Displays	0	398	398
Reallocation of existing PIDS to new locations	0	163	163

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Improved customer satisfaction	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Improved Real Time Information for bus users.	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Reduce actual and perceived passenger times for buses.	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)

2.2 Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Grant funding Agreements	March 2025
Delivery Commences	April 2025
Delivery Completion	March 2026

2.3 Evaluation

Evaluation will be undertaken by the scheme promoter; a monitoring and evaluation plan has been produced and will be embedded into the forthcoming Grant Funding Agreement.

2.4 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 this project generates 'Very High Value for Money' with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of over 4.

2.5 RAG Assessment

The project's full 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	Green
	Economic case	Green

	Financial case	Amber
	Management case	Green
	Overall rating	Green

2.6 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 project business case.

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 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet. The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of this BSIP project including improving information provision to bus users, improving the attractiveness of the bus offer, 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 BISP 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	2025/26	Total
<i>Newcastle City Council</i>	£3,500,000	£3,500,000
Total (£)	£3,500,000	£3,500,000

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.

E. Legal implications

The comments of the Monitoring Officer have been incorporated in this report. Grant Funding Agreements (GFA) are being developed and prepared for onwards agreement with scheme promoters. GFAs will minimise any legal risks and ensure the North East CA's obligations to the Department for Transport in regard 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. This project will enhance access to the bus network and reduce social exclusion by providing next generation real time information. This project links directly to the theme of “Planning journeys, informing users, and supporting customers” in the draft Mayor’s Local Transport Plan, and should allow for easier access of information, and improve confidence in travelling by bus with the provision of accurate information.

G. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP programme and the Passenger Information Displays project 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. BSIP capital funding was approved and allocated at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet. The project has been developed in partnership with the seven local authorities and Nexus.

H. Appendices

Appendix A – Map of Bus Corridors identified in Bus Service Improvement Plan Strategy and Corridors delivering Intelligent Transport System schemes.

I. Background papers

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

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K. Glossary

North East CA- North East Combined Authority
BSIP- Bus Service Improvement Plan
JTC- Joint Transport Committee
DfT- Department for Transport
RTI- Real Time Information
UTMC- Urban Traffic Management Control

L. Consultee

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix A – Map of Bus Corridors identified in Bus Service Improvement Plan Strategy and Corridors delivering Intelligent Transport System schemes.

Points to note.

There is potential to continue this approach to investment in both Intelligent Transport Signals and Passenger Information Displays, through a wider series of bus corridors over a period of time through future funding programmes. Preparatory work for the second round of City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement is underway which will consider the business case for extending the investment made to date on the bus corridors identified below.

Through the proposed recycling of PIDs, it is envisaged that a higher number of these recycled displays will be utilised in rural areas including Northumberland and Durham.

