

Report to: Leeds City Council Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth)

Date: 17/11/2022

Subject: **Advancing Bus Provision**

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1. This report provides an update on on-going activities by the Combined Authority to advance bus provision across West Yorkshire.
- 1.2. This report summarises issues reported to meetings of West Yorkshire Combined Authority and its Transport Committee. The most recent reports to the Transport Committee can be viewed on the link below
[WYCA - Modern Gov](#)

2. Information

Current Issues Impacting Bus Service Delivery

- 2.1 Bus use reduced significantly during the pandemic lockdown periods and has been slow to recover. Currently bus patronage (and therefore revenue) is at around 80% of pre pandemic demand. As flexible working has become more commonplace it has also become clearer that pre-pandemic travel patterns are unlikely to be repeated. The expectation is that travel demand will be more evenly spread throughout the day/week requiring transport providers to adjust scheduling and ticketing options.
- 2.2 Throughout the pandemic the bus service was sustained by emergency public funding for bus services. This funding was due to end in October 2022 but

after the Mayor and several other Northern leaders wrote to Government urging the continuance of funding DfT announced £130m of extra national funding to run from October to March.

- 2.3 A joint analysis by operators and the CA revealed that 11% of West Yorkshire bus mileage was not economically viable. Whilst the extension of funding postponed many planned service cuts, First and Arriva withdrew some services in early October. Bus service provision is key to economic recovery and the lack of any longer-term funding commitment from the government means that the reliability of future bus service provision remains volatile and unclear. Following the CA Transport Committee on 14 October, Chair of the Committee Cllr Hinchcliffe wrote to the new Secretary of State urging a long term funding settlement for buses.
- 2.4 In addition to the funding gap, labour market shortages have impacted on bus service delivery and all bus operators have faced driver and engineer recruitment difficulties. These challenges together with the revenue shortfall and funding gap have led to bus operators reducing services and a higher level of service cancellations. The CA is working to stabilise service delivery with bus operators through the WY Bus Alliance.
- 2.5 Concerns have been raised at previous meetings regarding the accuracy of the real time information system which displays the predicted time of the next bus at signs on bus stops and online services to mobile phones. This matter has also been raised by the Combined Authority Transport & Infrastructure Committee. The back office to this system has been replaced and work is in progress to ensure the data used by the system is accurate, bus companies are administering the system input correctly and that the timetables held within the system accurately represent traffic conditions.

Bus Service Improvement Plan

- 2.6 The Combined Authority developed its Bus Service Improvement Plan, which sets out a vision for better buses in West Yorkshire, in response to the Government's National Bus Strategy which was published in October 2021. The Plan can be viewed on the link below
[West Yorkshire Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\) - West Yorkshire Combined Authority \(westyorks-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/bus-service-improvement-plan)
- 2.7. In April 2022 the Combined Authority was advised by the Department of Transport that it had successfully been awarded an indicative settlement of £69,974,070 revenue funding over three financial years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25) to support delivery of the Plan. The profile for each funding year is set out in the following table:

Financial Year	RDEL (£)
2022/23	£14,104,814
2023/24	£27,929,628
2024/25	£27,939,628
Total	£69,974,070

Outcome	Total revenue spend - 3 years (£000m)
Clear and simple fares	41,900 (60%)
•Fare reduction / simplification	38,900
•Business to customer sales and marketing, including behaviour change	1,000
•Business to business sales (Travel Plan Network, Mobility Credits)	1,000
•Internal capacity to support fare activity	1,000
An enhanced bus network	25,950 (37%)
•New and improved services	13,500
•Superbus – town network enhancements	10,600
•Service Innovation (including DRT, mobility hubs)	1,250
•Internal capacity to support network management	600
Bus Priority	2,050 (3%)
•Linkages between bus and urban traffic management and passenger information	450
•Safer Travel Campaign – shared resource with West Yorkshire Police to support public safety and effective bus operations	1,000
•Internal capacity to support enhanced bus performance management	600

**NB Capital elements of BSIP to be funded through CRSTS*

- 2.8 As per DfT guidance, the Combined Authority proposed to prioritise this funding to subsidise fares (driving down the cost of single journey and day tickets / the ‘daily cap’) and invest in new routes and enhanced services, radically improving the local bus network and delivering significant improvements for local passengers.
- 2.9 The “Mayor’s Fares” were introduced on 4 September 2022 and capped all single fares at a maximum of £2 and the maximum price anyone will pay for a day’s bus travel in the region at £4.50 (the MCard Day Saver available on any bus in the region). This represents the first step towards standardising bus fares across all bus company services. The fare setting process, wider ticket range and subsidy methodology has been prescribed within the Enhanced Partnership scheme following detailed discussions with bus companies and the West Yorkshire Ticketing Company. The maximum fares will be reviewed each year based upon inflation indices. Early indications would suggest adult bus travel has increased by 4-5% in the first weeks of the scheme.
- 2.10 Other prioritised investments included improvements to network travel information, shared training for all customer facing staff, initiatives to support safer travel, and marketing and communications to promote and maximise the benefits / passenger uptake of these Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) interventions.

- 2.11 On the 8th August 2022 the Combined Authority received a letter setting out that the £69,974,070 of funding was confirmed subject to a successful statutory consultation on the Bus Service Improvement Plan Enhanced Partnership scheme, which is due to conclude at the end of October 2022. The Enhanced Partnership is a statutory agreement between bus operators and the Combined Authority that explains how the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance will work together to implement interventions for improvement. The Combined Authority approved the Enhanced Partnership scheme for consultation at its meeting in July 2022. This statutory consultation will enable key stakeholders and local interest groups to share their feedback and views on the proposed scheme to ensure that we are working to improve bus services in ways that benefit the people of West Yorkshire.
- 2.12 The Combined Authority is also currently developing a five-year bus network plan in detail. This plan will ultimately help the Combined Authority to understand its aspirations for the regional bus network. It will also help us shape how it invests the approx. £31m BSIP funding allocated (over three financial years) to transform the network and the annual tendered services budget, as well as respond to potential service cuts by commercial operators when Bus Recovery Grant funding ends in 2023.

The Mayor's Big Bus Chat

- 2.14 The purpose of this engagement was to understand the current attitudes of local residents towards bus services and whether the proposals set out within the BSIP are responding appropriately to these views.
- 2.15 The survey was centred around BSIP themes and questions were formulated on travel habits; general views on buses; the local bus network; bus fares and tickets; customer service, support and safety (including accessibility); environmentally friendly travel, and congestion and bus priority.
- 2.16 The engagement ran from 11th July to 18th September 2022 and collected 1799 responses from the public. The feedback from this engagement is currently being analysed, after which a report on the findings will be formulated and will be used to inform revisions of the BSIP and the EP. The survey results will be reported to the CA Transport Committee.

Developing the Franchising Assessment

- 2.17 The Combined Authority published a Notice of Intent to conduct a Franchising Assessment in June 2021. Bus franchising is one of the three options available to local authorities when working with bus operators and is a situation where the deregulated bus market is suspended, and bus operators are only able to provide services under contract to the local transport authority. This would change the way that bus services are organised in the region, enabling local contracts to be awarded to run services based on the needs of local people and not private companies. It would allow much greater control over fares, routes,

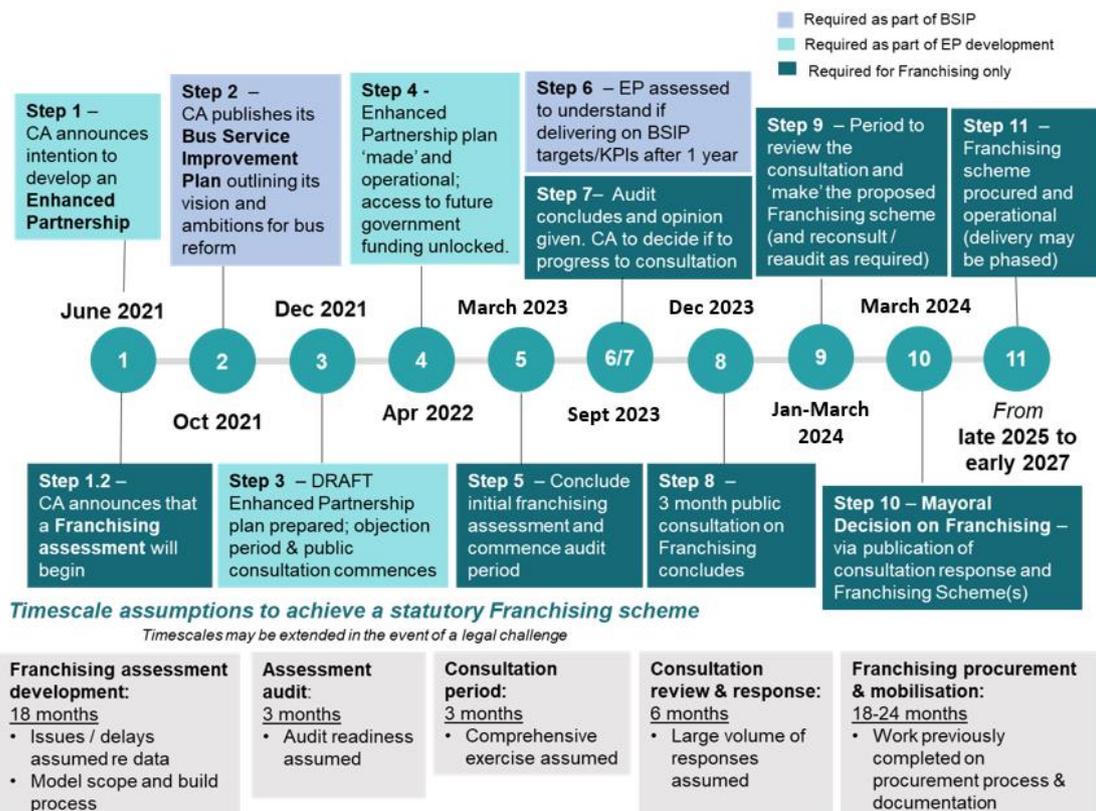
ticketing arrangements and timetables, making the system more responsive to the needs of the people of West Yorkshire.

2.18 An internal Bus Reform programme has been established to manage the franchising assessment, in alignment with the legal process set out under the Bus Services Act (2017)

2.19 The required outputs of initial key activities, including the Case for Change, Objectives and Options have all been approved by the Combined Authority’s Transport Committee.

2.20 The programme is now in the “assessment period” of and the Combined Authority have procured external assessment support to support development of an Outline Business Case that compares the various governance mechanisms – including franchising and an Enhanced Partnership – to understand what form provides the preferred option service provision in West Yorkshire.

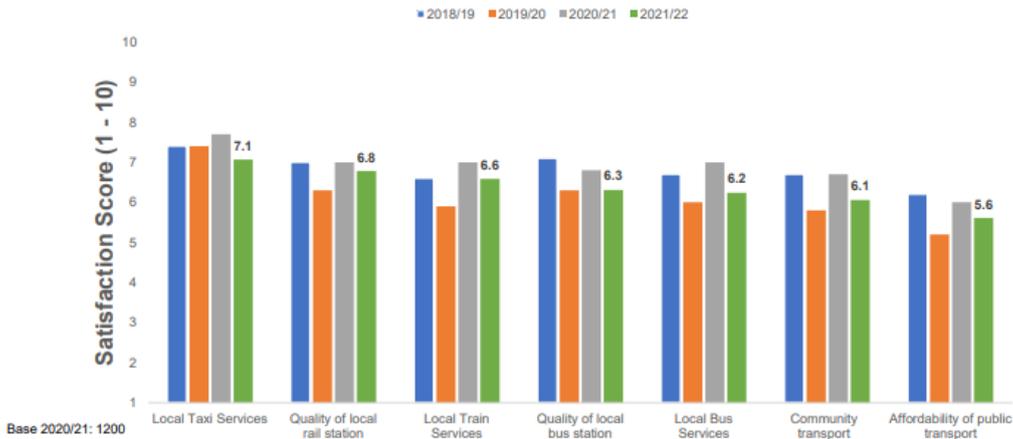
2.21 The programme is working towards enabling the Mayor to make a decision on franchising by March 2024. A roadmap including key dates and milestones can be seen below:



Evidence of Customer Satisfaction

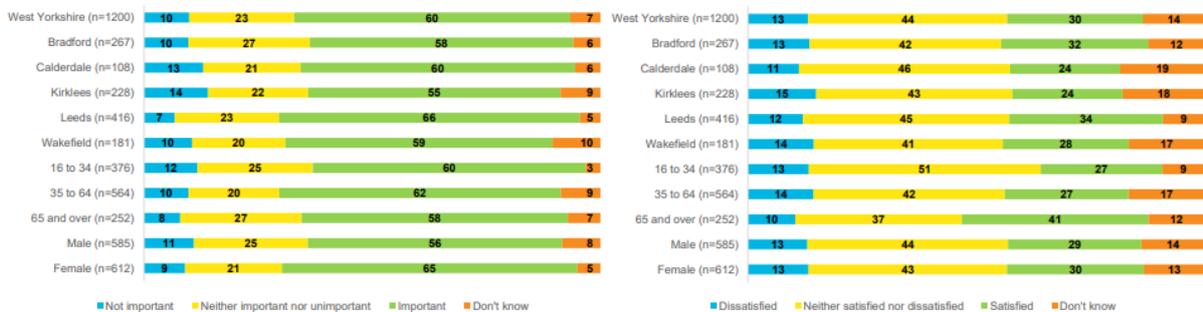
2.22 Satisfaction with West Yorkshire’s public transport is higher than in 2019/20, the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but lower than the previous wave in 2020/21.

2.23 Affordability of public transport is, as previous years, the asset with the lowest mean satisfaction score.



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2.24 The below table denotes the importance of and satisfaction with local bus services in West Yorkshire



• Note, from 1 to 10: Dissatisfied and not important rating of 1 to 3; neither dissatisfied nor important rating 4 to 7 and satisfied and important rating of 8 to 10

2.25 The West Yorkshire mean average weighting for importance is 7.64 and for satisfaction is 6.24

Progress on Delivering Air Quality Improvements From Buses

2.26 Supporting the transition of the bus fleet to zero emissions is a key aspiration of the Climate and Environment Plan as well as the Bus Service Improvement Plan. Although only around 2% of the current West Yorkshire bus fleet is zero emission, we have a number of funded schemes planned which will help to increase this to up to between 14% and 19%. The West Yorkshire Zero Emission Bus Programme, which was approved as Combined Authority on 23rd June 2022, will introduce between 179 and 245 zero emission electric buses and the

necessary support infrastructure into use in the West Yorkshire region. The scheme will be delivered in three parts:

- Phase 1 is a £56.2million programme to introduce 111 zero emission buses and associated infrastructure on routes in Bradford, Leeds, and Wakefield districts. In Leeds this involves equipping the Bramley depot with charging equipment and converting the Airport network of services to electric operation
- Phase 2 is a £4 million project to introduce 8 zero emission buses and associated infrastructure to routes in Calderdale and Kirklees. There will be a specific focus on exploring the impact of hilly landscape on the running of electric buses, and how the Combined Authority can work with smaller operators running tendered services to encourage a switch to zero emission buses.
- Phase 3 is a £21million project to introduce between 60 and 126 additional zero emission buses and associated infrastructure across the region (location and delivery model feasibility work underway).

2.27 The West Yorkshire Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) is part of this wider programme and is a £56m scheme funded by DfT and operators to deliver 111 electric, zero-emission buses and associated infrastructure across Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield. The Combined Authority was successful in receiving over £24m of funding from DfT (matched by £33m funding from local bus operators), and will now be able to increase the fleet of zero-emission buses in West Yorkshire to over 10%.

2.28 Further work is planned to develop a strategy to transition the remaining West Yorkshire bus fleet with zero emission to meet the target set in the Bus Service Improvement Plan of having a fully zero emission bus fleet by 2036.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1. A key aim of advancing the bus network is to enable and encourage people to travel by sustainable models of transport to tackle the climate emergency.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1. The interventions described in this report seek to protect services for communities, particularly in areas of high deprivation, in order to support the region's inclusive growth ambitions.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1. Supporting Equality and Diversity through ensuring the bus service is attractive, inclusive and accessible for all is a key aim of the West Yorkshire bus service interventions.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

7.1. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

8.1. There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

9.1. No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

10.1. That the Scrutiny Committee notes the current position regarding Advancing Bus Provision

11. Background Documents

Members of the Scrutiny Committee can access full papers on this topic through the Combined Authority website

[WYCA - Modern Gov](#)

12. Appendices

None.