

REPORT TO: WECA COMMITTEE
DATE: 30 NOVEMBER 2018
REPORT TITLE: TRANSPORT UPDATE
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Purpose of Report:

1. To update Members on progress with the Bus Strategy; Mass Transit proposal; and Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan development; and to seek views and feedback from members.

Background

2. The Bus Strategy is a requirement of devolution and is an integral element to the Joint Local Transport Plan. Project teams led by WECA and made up of officers from the all the local authorities, including North Somerset Council, are producing the Bus Strategy.
3. The Mass Transit proposal is a WECA funded study into the options for future mass transit within the WECA area. Initial work has been led by officers within BCC on WECA's behalf. The first phase of this work is nearing completion, with the recognition that future phases of the work need to align a number of separate studies into a co-ordinated approach. It is intended to submit a report to the 1st February 2019 WECA Committee detailing the proposed approach and seeking approval to progress the next phase of MRT.
4. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan (LCWIP) sets out WECA's approach to support DfT's national policy aspiration to double cycling activity by 2025. The document is jointly being developed by officers across WECA.

Bus Strategy

Background / Issues for Consideration

1. Bus patronage has been growing in the West of England since 2012, (by around 7% per year), bucking the national trend. Officers and supporting consultants are progressing the production of a Bus Strategy for the West of England (including North Somerset). The first stage of this process has been the production of an overview document to support the Joint Local Transport Plan.

2. Whilst the bus strategy has a provisional target to double passenger numbers by 2036, the interventions are envisaged to be shorter term in the overall transport investment programme, with further mode shift towards public transport to follow through the delivery of subsequent mass transit network.
3. Production of the full strategy for consultation is scheduled for Spring 2019. Consultation on the JLTP including the bus strategy overview document will be undertaken in January/February 2019.

Current Position

4. Stage 1 of the bus strategy was commenced in Summer 2018, with the following work areas:
 - Confirmation of strategy objectives (linked to the JLTP objectives);
 - Commissioning of consultant support;
 - A first round of operator engagement, to clarify operator opinion on barriers to growth and operational issues;
 - An assessment of the performance of the current network;
 - The production of an operating cost model (to provide an independent understanding of network operating cost and revenue levels); and
 - The production of an overview document to accompany the Joint Local Transport Plan.
5. The second phase of the work will include the following areas:
 - An assessment of, and recommendations on, potential changes to the network (this work is underway), followed by operator engagement;
 - A high-level assessment of delivery mechanisms;
 - The completion of the full strategy document for consultation.
6. The main components of the bus strategy are shown in Appendix 1. These work areas are substantial and interlinked, with wider implications for the overall transport network and all the key components have a critical role in supporting the target.

Stage One Work-stream – key findings

7. At a national level, bus patronage is falling due to constraints on central government funding and national fiscal policy which has, over time, increased the real cost of travelling by bus compared to that of driving a car.
8. However, passenger numbers in the West of England have been growing rapidly, bucking the national trend, though it is accepted that the WECA region has historically started from a lower baseline and still has fewer bus trips per head of population than most other 'core' English city regions, as shown in appendix 2.
9. Recent growth in patronage has resulted from a number of environmental factors and proactive interventions:
 - The impact of the rollout of residents parking zones in Bath and Bristol;
 - Fares review by the main commercial operator (First), holding the standard day fare to £4 for 12 years;
 - Growing population;
 - Fleet investment by the operator;
 - Significant investment by the councils in bus lanes and priority measures;

- Improved bus stops and information (e.g. GBBN, £43m of local authority investment – including RTI – which is being renewed and revamped with money from WECA Investment Fund).
10. Whilst existing frequencies, fares, passenger satisfaction and mode share compares well to other core cities, there are reliability issues and persistent sources of delay across some of the network.
 11. The current network also has a number of gaps in its coverage, including the extent of service provision in the North Fringe and in some rural areas. In addition, clarity and cohesiveness of the overall network is a challenge impacting the ability to interchange between services.
 12. Having been held for many years fares are broadly comparable (if not cheaper) with other equivalent areas of the UK and passenger satisfaction is high, with 89% of passengers in the West of England either very satisfied or satisfied with their journey experience.
 13. Concessionary travel passenger numbers are falling and now represents around 23% of overall patronage.
 14. A bus operating cost model has been developed and includes estimates of fixed costs (such as depots), variable costs such as fuel, as well as drivers and fleet costs. This estimates the annual cost of operating the network in the West of England (across all operators) to be around £104 million pa. The next phase of work, to consider alternative network scenarios, is being undertaken against the backdrop of this cost estimate.
 15. The developing vision for the Bus Strategy is to deliver a substantial improvement to the quality, reliability and accessibility of our bus network, with the Bus Strategy forming an important complementary strategy to the Joint Local Transport Plan. The Bus Strategy aligns with the JLTP objectives:

JLTP Objective	Bus Strategy Objective
Support sustainable economic growth	Deliver a comprehensive network, maximise service reliability, reduce journey times, deliver simplified ticketing
Promote equality and accessibility	Increase availability and ease of use of accessible waiting facilities and vehicles. Improve integration with other modes, improving access to key employment, health and leisure destinations
Improve air quality and respond to climate change	Reduce emissions from traffic by increasing bus use, and reduce carbon and other emissions from buses
Contribute to better health, wellbeing, safety and security	Maximise service quality, in terms of vehicles, information and bus stop environment
Create better places	Improve public domain by removing car traffic, mode shift onto buses, and where possible reallocate highway space. Improve access to places for buses public transport, and the design for bus services in new developments

16. It is proposed to consult on the key findings of Phase 1 and the developing views within Phase 2 in early 2019, aligned with the consultation process for the JLTP.

Phase 2 work-stream areas

17. An appraisal of alternative network options forms a key part of the work programme. It is anticipated that the promotion and operation of interchange has significant potential to boost passenger numbers, by opening up a wider range of potential trips, simplifying the network and passengers' awareness of it, therefore normalising the concept of transfer.
18. An interchange-based network will require a significantly higher proportion of cross-city services than is currently the case, where operators have tended to split cross-city services in the city centre due to reliability issues. This will require the provision (and enforcement) of further bus priority measures. Operator views on the suggested network will be sought later in the year.
19. The network review may have implications for the extent of the £5m of supported services. The Bus Strategy is proposed to include a review of how supported services are prioritised to take better account of issues such as links to economic output, available alternatives and the need to provide socially-necessary/inclusive services. The network review may also have implications for the role and extent of community transport operations.
20. The network review will also take into account existing metrobus routes and proposed extensions. Boarding figures on the two routes launched to date are significantly above forecasts, and they have set examples of good practice around quality of infrastructure and branding, which are being built on through complementary services such as the T1/T2 services to Thornbury.
21. The appraisal of delivery frameworks will involve a light touch assessment of opportunities to franchise (where local authorities and/or WECA would specify fares and frequencies and bus operators tender to provide them), alongside an Enhanced Quality Partnership Scheme (which provides some additional powers to current arrangements), and existing, more informal operating arrangements.
22. It should be noted that Transport for Greater Manchester have allocated £11.5 million for an assessment of the case for franchising in their area. It is also important to highlight that any franchising recommendation may have significant implications for revenue support budgets.
23. BCC is leading on potential infrastructure proposals to make up the Greater Bristol Bus Network 2 project, to help mitigate the 'urban living' component of the Joint Spatial Plan housing allocation. This package will be pivotal in improving service reliability and enabling the provision of more cross-city services to facilitate better use of interchange.
24. Other measures (such as traffic signal upgrades) are likely to play an important role, as the potential for further wide-ranging, conventional bus priority measures becomes more challenging, following those packages already delivered through the GBBN1 and Metrobus major schemes. The JLTP also includes separate major schemes to improve bus infrastructure in Bath; Metrobus extensions; new and improved park and

ride sites; and a Metrobus consolidation project; as well as (longer term) Mass Transit corridors.

25. Operator investment is expected to be a significant 'ask' as part of the overall strategy. Operator dialogue is ongoing regarding the potential for new investment, including the opportunity for new vehicles and substantial increases in frequency,
26. The bus strategy will, inevitably, highlight the impacts of (and implications for) wider local authority policy, such as the allocation of road space; the provision (and pricing) of parking in existing and new developments; the design of new developments; air quality; and longer term opportunities around the use of road pricing and other restraint mechanisms, in order to ensure that the passenger target can be met.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Background

27. The LCWIP is a proposed sub-regional network plan for walking and cycling identifying routes and zones for further development. This would enable a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements to be more easily considered for future investment.
28. This will enable WECA to be more strategic and structured in how walking and cycling improvements can be prioritised across the sub-region; it gains internal and public buy-in for proposals; and allows WECA to make a stronger case for scheme funding.
29. The integration with the Bus Strategy, JLTP, Greater Bristol Bus Network, and other emerging plans needs to be understood before scheme options can be costed and a high level economic appraisal can be undertaken. This will allow further prioritisation between schemes with the aim of seeking to have this priority list agreed with stakeholders.
30. A range of factors are being considered as part of the approach:
 - Existing commuting flows for cycling and existing walking routes and zones
 - Potential for growth in cycling within the WECA region
 - The ability for cycling and walking to sustainably support new homes and jobs at key development sites
 - Improving connectivity for deprived areas
 - Improving connections to secondary schools, colleges, universities
 - The ability to interchange with buses and rail and support sub-regional connectivity
 - Support for road safety, air quality and the health agenda

Timescales, progress and next steps

31. The overall timescale aims to have an agreed and adopted plan towards the end of 2019. This would be subject to a report to a future WECA committee for sign off.
32. Key strategic walking and cycling desire lines are already mapped out and prioritised according to strategic priorities that align with Joint Local Transport Plan objectives (i.e. connecting areas of deprivation, connecting to new housing, connecting to new jobs, connecting to schools etc.). These are being mapped against highway layouts.

33. Route audits will be undertaken between now and early next year to understand constraints and potential interventions and prioritisation criteria will be developed. The outcomes of these audits will then be considered against agreed prioritisation criteria to work the plan up to a level at which it can be consulted on. Consultation is planned for early summer 2019.
34. Comments and adjustment to the plan would then be undertaken before a report back to WECA committee and the proposed adoption of the plan in late 2019.

Mass Transit

35. Initial work has been undertaken by BCC on behalf of WECA. The report output and conclusions are currently being reviewed to ensure that the scale of ambition for a future Mass Transit system is appropriate for the region.
36. The original scope for Mass Transit included the need to:
 - develop the Mass Transit network, building the outline business case
 - identify preferred technology option(s) and route alignments
 - inform the future development of linked schemes and studies including the BSWEL study, A4 Metrobus, and Park & Rides;
 - advise on funding options and potential costs for detailed scheme development;
 - Advise on stakeholder engagement and consultation processes including development of a stakeholder engagement plan
37. As part of the ongoing work it has been recognised that a number of studies are underway or proposed that would impact on any Mass transit solution developed for the area. It is anticipated that these work streams will be aligned and managed under a more cohesive project governance approach. It is proposed to submit a report to the 1st February 2019 WECA Committee detailing the approach and seeking approval to progress the next phase of MRT.

Current study work

38. **Metrowest** – an item on Metrowest is being presented to joint committee on 30th November 2018. This also addresses the recent letter from Secretary of State which required a number of key steps of West of England authorities. The report essentially seeks approval of the proposed governance structure for Phase 1A and 1B and provides an update on funding, including seeking approval for a further draw down of the Local Growth Fund to enable work to continue.
39. **Light Rail, Tram Train study** - This work is integral to the Metrowest proposals. Officers have met with both Network Rail and Sheffield Tram specialists and subject to Joint Committee approval it is proposed to engage them on study work to compare the relative costs of the original heavy rail approach with a potential light rail, tram-train solution.
40. **Bristol Area Feasibility Study** – work continues developing a range of objectives for the regions suburban rail and timetabling improvements. These are currently being worked up into a scope for phase 2 to map out the delivery of objectives identified in phase 1.

41. **The Bristol Southwest Economic Link study (BSWEL)** – work continues with NSC and Bristol Airport in developing proposals. One output of BSWEL has been a pre-feasibility report to carry out high-level investigations into the potential for improved rail connections to Bristol Airport, provided as either a heavy rail link, light rail link or using a metro type technology. The interaction with any proposed mass transit solution for the region is therefore critical and officers are discussing how best to align objectives and milestones for the proposals.
42. **Network Rail (NR) infrastructure investment discussions** – WECA continue to work with NR to map out infrastructure improvements to facilitate short, medium and long-term rail aspirations. These include elements such as Bristol East junction, network resilience and improvements to track, signalling, points etc. which are critical to underpin delivery aspirations for other studies.
43. **Station accessibility improvements** - NR are currently developing a programme of accessibility and infrastructure improvements to rail stations and have longer-term plans for the Temple Quarter redevelopment and improvements to Temple Meads station.
44. **Metrobus future phases** – consideration of how the initial success of Metrobus can be built upon to provide a significant element of any mass transit solution for the area. Ensuring that Metrobus compliments both existing bus services and any future Mass transit proposals will be key.
45. **Mass Transit phase 2** – Alongside the need to align the work streams listed above, it is recognised that any proposals would need to address the short, medium term and long-term stages for any mass transit scheme which are necessary to design, construct and operate a mass transit system(s). Work streams for these are being developed aimed at producing a scope that could be taken to market. Approvals of any next phase of the works would be subject to WECA committee approval.

Consultation:

46. Some questions on the bus strategy are included within the overall questionnaire forming part of the consultation on the JLTP4 (for January 2019) to explore passengers' current perception of the network. In addition, it is proposed to consult on the key findings of Phase 1 and the developing views within Phase 2 in early 2019, aligned with the consultation process for the JLTP.
47. Once the Bus Strategy, full document is completed, wider consultation will be undertaken from Spring 2019 on its recommendations.
48. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is due for consultation in early summer 2019.

Other Options Considered:

49. The development of a Bus Strategy is a WECA devolution requirement.
50. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans are DfT's recommended approach to Transport authorities for planning their networks of walking and cycling routes.
51. The Mass Rapid Transit proposals will align a range of study work already underway within WECA. These could continue to be progressed in isolation however it is

anticipated that complimentary benefits and a joined-up approach/strategy would not be realised. In addition, there are risks that without co-ordination some elements of separate programs could be conflict, where for example a mass transit corridor could be in competition with improvements to a strategic bus route.

Economic Impact Assessment:

52. There are no direct implications arising from this report. Future bus network operating frameworks, which will be explored as part of the Bus Strategy, will need to include an economic impact assessment as part of their evaluation.
53. The future development of proposals for Mass Transit would need to be aligned within the current DfT scheme assessment model.

Risk Management/Assessment:

54. There are no risks arising from the updates within this report.

Public Sector Equality Duties:

55. The public sector equality duty created under the Equality Act 2010 means that public authorities must have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
56. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:
 - Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
 - Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
57. The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.
58. There are no equalities implications in relation to this report.

Finance Implications:

59. There are no financial implications resulting from the update items within the report.
60. The future development of any mass transit proposal would require financial support to progress. Existing internal resources are sufficient to develop the scope for consultant support with a view to reporting back to WECA Committee in February 2019 once proposed costs are submitted against scope proposals.

Advice given by: Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services

Legal Implications:

61. Production of a Bus Strategy as a devolution requirement of the West of England Combined Authority.

Advice given by: Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal

Land/Property Implications;

62. There are no implications arising from this report.

Human Resources Implications:

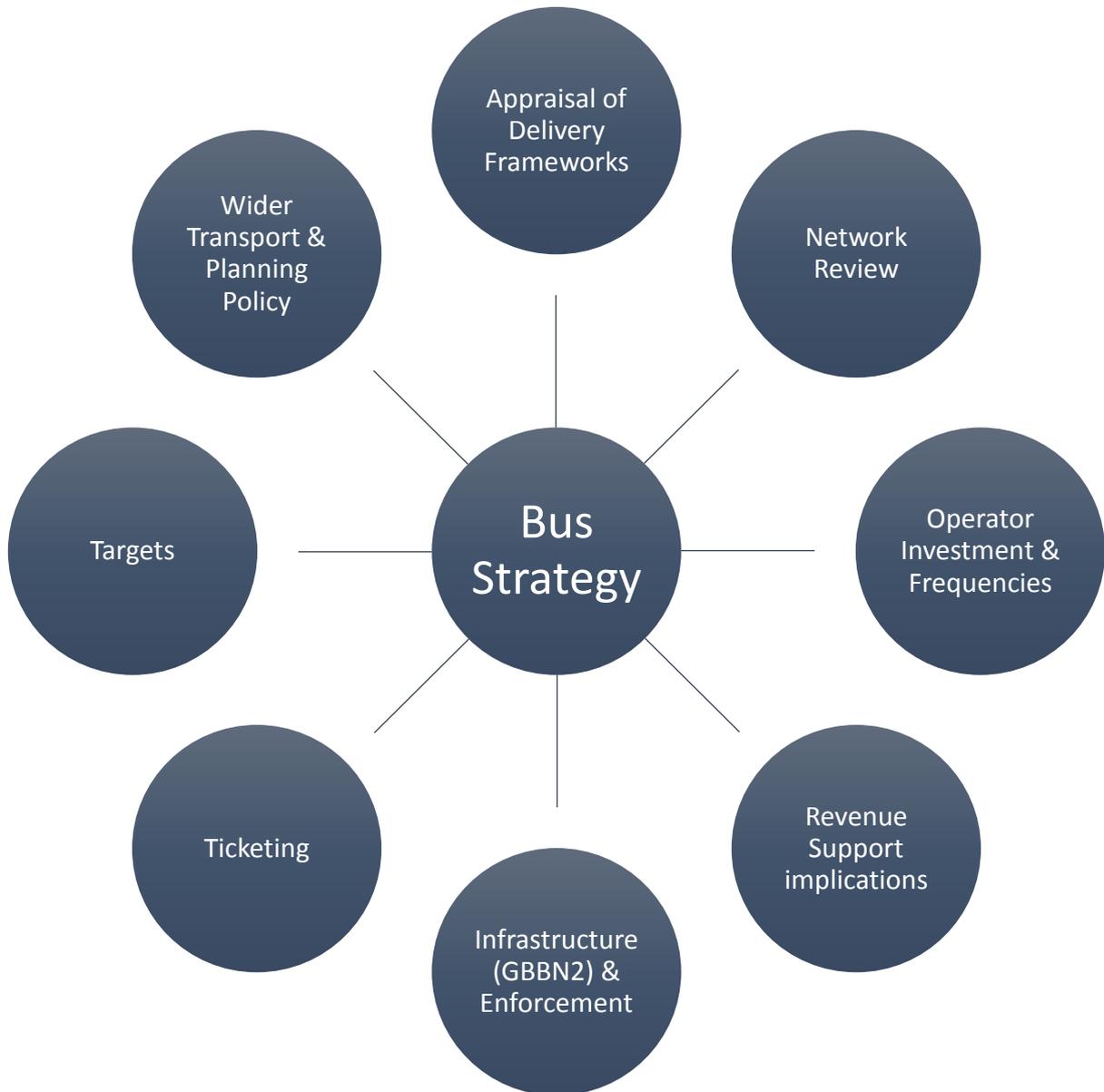
63. The Bus Strategy, Mass Rapid Transit, Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan are joint projects with resources provided by the unitary authorities and WECA, supported by external consultants providing technical expertise.

Recommendation:**The WECA is recommended to: -**

Note the ongoing work and provide views on the Bus Strategy, Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Mass Transit progress.

Report Author: Jason Humm – Head of Transport

Appendix 1: Components of bus strategy



Appendix 2: WECA comparison of passenger journeys per head of population

