

JOINT DECISION OF NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL AND WEST OF ENGLAND MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY

DECISION OF: NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL ASSISTANT DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND TRANSPORT AND WEST OF ENGLAND MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES.

WITH ADVICE FROM: NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL HEAD OF TRANSPORT PLANNING AND WEST OF ENGLAND MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY HEAD OF INTEGRATED TRANSPORT OPERATIONS

DECISION NO: 2024-BSIP-08

SUBJECT: Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Passenger Experience Initiative F2: Marketing, Promotion, and Communications.

DECISION:

To approve the funding allocation of £1,802,312 of the BSIP F2: Marketing, Promotion, and Communications initiative, to deliver BSIP marketing and communication activities that will enhance bus services through strategic marketing, effective promotion, and improved communications to increase patronage and passenger satisfaction.

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1. One of the key initiatives under the BSIP is Initiative F2: Marketing, Promotion, and Communications.

1.2. The aim of this initiative is to promote and enhance bus services within the region through effective marketing, promotion, and communications strategies. By implementing this initiative, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and North Somerset Council (NSC) seek to increase patronage, encourage modal shift from private vehicles to public transport, and improve the overall passenger experience.

1.3. Project Deliverables:

- Create and implement a series of joint promotions, working with bus operators, including route/corridor campaigns, fare initiatives and targeting key user groups.
- Create and implement a sustainable and on-going marketing programme which increases awareness of the bus network and helps increase bus patronage to pre-pandemic levels.
- Support driver recruitment efforts, with a focus on emphasising positive images and kindness aspects, to enhance the workforce and ensure excellent service delivery.

- Promote fares offers to increase new passengers, and usage by existing passengers.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for conducting outreach programmes. Work with partner organisations and key locations (workplaces, educational institutions, venues), raising awareness of bus services and facilitating easy access to information, to encourage more bus use by their employees/customers.

2. REASONS:

2.1. The implementation of Initiative F2: Marketing, Promotion, and Communications is driven by the goal of enhancing bus service visibility and desirability within the West of England region. Initiative F2 plays a crucial role in achieving the following key objectives:

- Increased Ridership: By attracting new passengers and encouraging existing ones to use buses more frequently.
- Passenger Confidence and Trust: Through effective communication and promotion
- Modal Shift from Private Vehicles: Through strategic promotional activities and fare incentives.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

3.1. Options considered are outlined in the table below:

	Option	Outcomes	Suggestion
A	Do nothing	The impact and reach of BSIP initiatives and projects will be significantly compromised, affecting their success and impact on the region. Doing nothing could also damage the reputation of the MCA and NSC amongst our key stakeholders and the public.	Reject the option
B	Approve spend	This allows the best chance of achieving the objectives set out above. Additionally, this increases public visibility of improvements and investments that the MCA and NSC are delivering.	Approve the option

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

4. Costs:

- 4.1. Cost to deliver the outputs of BSIP Passenger Experience Initiative F2: Marketing, Promotion, and Communications is £1,802,312 based on the funding award from the Department for Transport.
- 4.2. A summary of the areas in which the budget will be spent is shown below. This is further broken down into individual projects within the full budget.

Project	Amount
Scheme promotions	£153,000
WESTlink	£200,000
Birthday offer	£200,000
Care leavers (National care leavers week 24-28 Oct)	£10,000
Fares Package 3	£50,000
Route and corridor campaigns. To include any new routes or services introduced, promotion of enhanced services, and underused services.	£615,000
Campaigns aimed at increasing usage by specific user groups (youth, concessionary etc)	£110,000
Catch the Bus month	£100,000
Engagement activity	£30,000
Outreach programme	£200,000
Bus passenger charter	£50,000
Personal travel planning	£10,000
Ambassador programme	£10,000
Public engagement in buses	£64,000
Budget total	£1,802,000

5. Funding:

- 5.1. F2: Marketing, Promotion, and Communications has an agreed budget of £1.802m from the Department for Transport. These schemes have been designed to fit within the funding envelope available.

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is empowered to make this decision in accordance with Part 8 Article 24 of the West of England Combined Authority Order 2017 (SI 2017/126).

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATION:

- 7.1. The West of England Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan has three priority environmental themes: nature recovery, climate resilience and net zero carbon by 2030.
- 7.2. Nature recovery: This project has the potential to help people connect with nature (including parks) improving physical and mental wellbeing and contributing to social and economic value. Therefore, this project should explore the opportunity to promote bus services to nature destinations such as parks.
- 7.3. Net zero carbon: This project has the potential to contribute to the region's net zero carbon ambitions, by encouraging bus use to reduce car dependency. There will be carbon emissions associated with the activities of this project, and we recommend considering a carbon management plan to reduce such emissions.
- 7.4. Examples of climate change and environmental implications related to energy consumption and waste management include:
 - Waste Reduction and Sustainable Materials: In implementing marketing and promotional activities, there is an opportunity to consider sustainable practices in material usage and waste reduction. By using recycled or eco-friendly materials for promotional materials and reducing paper-based advertisements, the initiative can minimise its environmental footprint. Additionally, digital marketing approaches can be employed, further reducing the need for physical printed materials and their associated environmental impacts.
 - Energy and Resource Efficiency: Efficient use of resources and energy in marketing and promotional activities can further contribute to minimising the initiative's environmental impact. By adopting energy-efficient technologies and practices, such as LED displays, electronic communication tools, and optimised marketing campaigns, the energy consumption and resource usage can be reduced.
 - By encouraging the use of buses and promoting sustainable transportation choices, this initiative plays a role in reducing emissions, improving air quality, and fostering behaviour change towards greener travel options. Careful consideration of sustainable practices in marketing and promotional activities can further enhance the positive environmental impact of this initiative, contributing to the region's overall efforts in combating climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.

8. CONSULTATION:

- 8.1. Formal consultation is not a requirement for this budget.
- 8.2. Consultation that has taken place is outlined below, along with consultation that will need to take place as the project progresses.

INFORMED:

MCA: West of England Metro Mayor, Mayor’s Office (on a project-by-project basis), Interim Head of Integrated Transport Operations as BSIP Senior Responsible Owner.

NSC: Leader (on a project-by-project basis), Head of Transport at NSC as BSIP Senior Responsible Owner.

ACTIVE WITHIN THE PROJECT:

BSIP Programme Manager at the MCA and NSC, BSIP Project Managers, Deputy Head of Comms at the MCA and NSC.

Bus operators, on a project-by-project basis, as appropriate. Consultation has taken place with representatives from the following MCA teams: Commercial, Environment, Finance and Legal and their comments have been incorporated in this document.

UNITARY AUTHORITY ENGAGEMENT:

A draft Director Decision Notice was shared with the Unitary Authorities (UAs) on 25 October 2023, seeking their input and feedback. The UAs have expressed overall support for this work package and acknowledge the importance of promoting BSIP initiatives, particularly in relation to bus services. The UAs have specifically called for enhanced promotion of WESTlink to inform the public about how and where to access the service. Future promotional efforts for WESTlink are currently in the planning stages, with co-ordination taking place in collaboration with the MCA Communication Team and input from the Metro Mayor.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT:

9.1. The risks are as follows:

	Risks	Mitigations
1	Stakeholders challenge level of spend.	Spend will be reviewed on a regular basis. Campaigns to be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure effectiveness and value for money.
2	Senior approval process for campaigns, slows things down.	Campaigns developed in collaboration with senior stakeholders including Mayor’s Office and NSC leader where appropriate.

10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

10.1. The Equality Impact Assessment for Initiative F2: Marketing, Promotion, and Communications (Appendix 3) indicates that the initiative has the potential to positively impact individuals with different protected characteristics by promoting inclusive and accessible bus services. To maximise positive impacts and mitigate potential risks, it is essential to ensure that all marketing materials, communication campaigns, and promotions

are sensitive, inclusive, and representative of the diverse communities in the West of England region.

11. COMMERCIAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS:

- 11.1. There are various initiatives which have been implemented as part of BSIP for bus services which includes, but is not limited to, Fares Packages (Reimbursement Agreement, Birthday Offer, Care Leavers).
- 11.2. The success of these initiatives is largely dependent on increased patronage of bus services.
- 11.3. Embarking on marketing, promotions and communications campaigns will provide increased awareness to the public which in return will support additional patronage, generate revenue growth and overall lead to effective utilisation of the Fares Agreement initiatives.
- 11.4. This will also improve public confidence in the Mayoral Combined Authority.

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed: Lucy Shomali, Director of Place, North Somerset Council.

Date: 31/01/2024

Signed: David Gibson, Strategic Director of Infrastructure, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.

Date: 26/02/2024

Signed: Rachel Musson, Strategic Director of Corporate Resources, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.

Date: 05/02/2024

