

**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-09**

**SUBJECT:**

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – Passenger Experience Initiative F3 and F4: Travel Guides,  
Journey Planning, and Within Journey Information.

**DECISION:**

To approve the allocation of £2.1m of the BSIP Initiative F3 and F4: Travel Guides, Journey  
Planning, and Within Journey Information to enhance the availability and quality of information  
provided to bus passengers throughout their journey.

**1. BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1. The Government vision for improving bus services in England was set out in the  
National Bus Strategy (Bus Back Better) in 2021, requiring local transport authorities to  
publish a BSIP setting out how bus services will be improved in the area. The West of  
England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and North Somerset Council (NSC) were  
successful in being awarded a fund of £105.5m to deliver the shared BSIP.
- 1.2. Of this funding award, £5.8m has been allocated towards BSIP delivery plans F & H  
which will deliver initiatives to enhance the Passenger Experience across the region, of  
which Delivery Plan F attracts £2.1m.
- 1.3. Passenger Experience refers to the quality of service, comfort, and satisfaction that  
passengers receive during their journey and creates an environment that meets their

needs and preferences, offering seamless and enjoyable travel experiences addressing passengers' expectations, providing accurate and timely information, ensuring accessibility for all individuals, and optimising comfort and convenience.

1.4. Whilst Delivery Plan H focuses on enhancing the physical and service aspects of passenger experience and is the subject of a separate Director Decision Notice (DDN), Delivery Plan F concentrates on improving the availability and quality of information provided to passengers - enhancing the user experience and providing comprehensive and accurate journey related information.

1.5. F3: Travel Guides and Journey Planning are outlined in the table below:

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Output</b>
Bus Information Strategy	A published Bus Information Strategy, that provides comprehensive guidance on bus information dissemination.
Digital Interactive Travel Map	Development of an interactive map, that enables passengers to access Real-Time travel information.
Promotion Stands/Displays	Procurement of stands and displays to promote travel related leaflets and guides.
Local Travel Guides	A suite of local travel guides and timetable booklets, catering to the needs of different regions and passenger groups.
Community Transport Directory	A published directory of community transport services, distributed to key locations.
Park and Ride (P&R) Leaflets	Leaflets providing information and promote the P&R bus services and facilities.
Local Town Guides	A suite of local town guides to assist passengers in navigating local areas when using public transport.
Fares Information	Comprehensive fares information, including multi-operator tickets, added to the TravelWEST and Traveline platforms for easy access of pricing details.
Social Media Activity	Delivery of a programme for increased social media activity to engage with new passenger audiences effectively and provide timely travel updates.
E-Newsletter	Delivery of an improved e-newsletter, that provides relevant and informative travel related content to a wider subscriber base.
Journey Planning and Ticketing App	Development of a user-friendly app, that integrates journey planning and ticketing into one platform as part of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) integration.
System Development and Integration	Upgrades made to interfaces to improve the accuracy and accessibility of information on service disruptions for passengers.
Improved User Experience for Service Disruptions Section	Improvements made to the "Service Disruptions" section of the Travelwest website, so passengers can easily access relevant information during disruptions.

1.6. F4: Within Journey Information, deliverables are outlined in the table below:

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Output</b>
Bus/Rail Wayfinding	Creation of comprehensive wayfinding information to guide passengers to bus and rail interchange points.
E-Paper Digital Displays	Completed pilot of e-paper digital display units at roadside locations to provide up to date and environmentally friendly bus service information. With option to extend the use of e-paper displays across the region.
Local Walking Maps/Guides	Creation of walking maps/guides for central areas, interchanges, and tourist locations to ensure seamless travel.
Advance Notice of Network/Service Changes	A process established for providing advance notice of all network and service changes to keep passengers informed.
Roadside Display Cases	Installation of new roadside display cases at bus stops for better visibility and display of service information (where E-paper digital displays not used).
Service Numbers on Bus Stop Flags	Implementation of an approach for displaying service numbers on bus stop flags.
QR Codes and Connectivity	QR codes and connectivity features introduced on timetable displays (including rural stops), to enable easy access to information.
Programme for RTI (Real-Time Information) Improvements	Delivery of a structured programme for enhancing the RTI system to provide accurate and timely updates to passengers.
Improved Connectivity for Cancellations	Improvements made to interfaces between operating systems to promptly notify passengers of disruptions.
New Central Display Thin Film Transistor (TFT) Screens	Installation of new central display TFT screens to replace old 12-line dot-matrix interchanges displays.
24/7 Messaging Function	Development of a 24/7 messaging function for RTI screens to ensure passengers can always remain informed.
Solar Powered RTI Display Units	Completed a trial of solar powered RTI display units, as an environmentally friendly alternative.

## 2. REASONS:

- 2.1. Initiatives F3 and F4 prioritise the needs and expectations of passengers, providing them with reliable information, seamless travel experiences, and a welcoming environment according with the wider objectives set out in the CA's BSIP (Appendix 1).
- 2.2. The successful implementation of Initiatives F3 and F4 deliverables will empower passengers with comprehensive travel information and user-friendly digital platforms, facilitating seamless and convenient travel experiences for passengers across the region.

## 3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

- 3.1. Options considered are outlined in the table below:

Option	Cost	Outcome	Suggestion
Do Nothing	Nil	Failure to deliver against the commitments made to passengers across the region and to the Department for Transport (DfT) impacting on the bus network's ability to generate new sustained use and the success of other interlinked work pillars across the BSIP programme.	Reject this option
Do Less	Estimated £1,750,000	Some elements of Initiatives F3 and F4 may be reduced in scope or omitted, and this is acceptable but needs scope change agreement from DfT. However, as Initiatives F3 and F4 comprise many smaller outputs that all build into a sum that is greater than the parts, there is a significant risk to the overall success of the initiatives if elements are reduced or removed before their potential to assist with network generation can be realised.	Reject this option
Do Maximum	£2,100,000 (full BSIP allocation – see further main heading)	Will deliver fully against the BSIP objectives and will optimise the passenger experience. Once the Passenger Experience deliverables are in place, they	Approve this option

	breakdown below)	will leave a long-term legacy of improvement.	
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## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

### 4. COSTS:

4.1. The proposed funding breakdown for Initiative F3 and F4 is outlined in the table below:

<b>BSIP Initiative F3 and F4 Activity Area</b>	<b>Proposed Budget</b>
<b>BSIP Initiative F3</b>	
Digital Interactive Map	£40,000
Local Travel Guides and Timetable Booklets	£200,000
Travelwest Upgrades	£310,000
System Development and Integrations to Improve Service Information	£300,000
<b>BSIP Initiative F3 Sub-Total</b>	<b>£850,000</b>
<b>BSIP Initiative F4</b>	
Infrastructure – Supply and Install	£1,000,000
RTI Improvements	£250,000
<b>BSIP Initiative F4 Sub-Total</b>	<b>£1,250,000</b>
<b>Total (BSIP Initiatives F3 and F4)</b>	<b>£2,100,000</b>

### 5. FUNDING:

5.1. Cost to deliver the outputs of BSIP Passenger Experience Initiatives F3 and F4: Travel Guides, Journey Planning, and Within Journey Information is £2,100,000. The funding has been agreed with DfT.

### 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).

6.2. At its meeting on 1 July 2022, the Committee resolved *“to delegate to the Combined Authority Director of Infrastructure and Director of Investment and Corporate Services,*

*in consultation with North Somerset Council, authority to spend against the BSIP delivery programme within the funding allocation from the DfT. In the absence of unanimous agreement, the delegation reverts to the Combined Authority Chief Executive in consultation with the Unitary Authority CEOs.”*

6.3. This is a Key Decision which was notified in the Forward Plan on 22 December 2023.

**Date: 26/01/2024**

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- 7.1. The West of England Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan has three priority themes to deliver by 2030; Nature recovery, Climate resilience and Net Zero carbon.
- 7.2. **Nature recovery:** This project has the potential to help people connect with nature, improving physical and mental wellbeing for people in the region and contributing to social and economic value. This project should incorporate the mapping of natural assets, as destinations and connectivity options e.g., green corridors, in the journey information
- 7.3. **Climate resilience:** The project should consider the opportunities to help people manage during extremes and how this can be incorporated into travel information.
- 7.4. **Net zero carbon:** This project has the potential to contribute to the regions net zero carbon ambitions, by providing better passenger experiences, helping to encourage bus use and reduce car dependency. With carbon emissions associated to the activities of this project, and we recommend undertaking a carbon management plan to reduce such emissions.
- 7.5. Examples of climate change and environmental implications, including those related to energy consumption and waste management, include:
  - Energy consumption - the development and implementation of digital platforms, such as interactive online guides and mobile applications, require energy for servers, data processing, and user interactions. It is important to ensure that energy consumption is managed efficiently by using energy efficient servers and adopting sustainable practices, such as utilising renewable energy sources or optimising data storage and processing.
  - Paper usage and waste management - while digital platforms are a primary focus of the initiative, there is still a recognition that some passengers prefer or rely on paper-based guides. The production and distribution of printed travel guides and leaflets can have environmental implications in terms of paper consumption, deforestation, and waste generation. It is important to consider sustainable

printing practices, such as using recycled or responsibly sourced paper, minimising excess printing, and implementing proper recycling programs for used materials.

- Carbon footprint of digital infrastructure - the development and maintenance of digital infrastructure, including servers, data centres, and network infrastructure, have associated carbon footprints due to energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. It is important to consider sustainable practices in managing and reducing the carbon footprint of digital infrastructure, such as using energy efficient hardware, optimising data centre cooling systems, and adopting renewable energy sources for powering digital infrastructure.
- Green procurement and sustainable practices - during the procurement process for materials, equipment, and services associated with the project, adopting green procurement practices can contribute to reducing the environmental impact. This includes considering suppliers with sustainable practices, selecting energy efficient devices, and minimising packaging waste.

7.6. By considering and implementing sustainable practices in energy consumption, waste management, paper usage, and procurement, the project can mitigate its environmental impact and contribute to climate change mitigation efforts. It will be essential to prioritise environmentally responsible choices and continuously evaluate and improve sustainability practices throughout the project lifecycle.

## 8. CONSULTATION:

8.1. Formal consultation is not a requirement of this project. Consultation that has taken place for the Passenger Experience BSIP Initiatives F3 and F4, including that with the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), North Somerset Council (NSC) and the Unitary Authorities (UAs) is outlined below:

<b>INFORMED:</b>
MCA: West of England Metro Mayor, Mayor’s Office, Commercial Team, and Regeneration, Development and Transport Steering Group.
NSC: Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive Lead for Highways and Transport.

<b>ACTIVE WITHIN THE PROJECT:</b>
MCA: Head of Integrated Transport Operations as BSIP Senior Responsible Owner, Head of Transport Strategy, BSIP Programme Manager. 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.
NSC: BSIP Senior Responsible Owner, Transport Officers.

UAs: Bath and North-East Somerset (BANES) Council Transport Officers, Bristol City Council (BCC) Transport Officers, South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) Transport Officers.

**UA ENGAGEMENT:**

UAs have all been consulted on the scope as captured in the Project initiation Document. The project has also been presented to the Regeneration Development and Transport Steering Group, and BSIP Programme Board. All UAs have been supportive of the project in principle and have agreed to be part of a project working group.

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT:**

9.1. The risks are as follows:

	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
1	Bus Charter timescales are short, and EP requires adoption by March 2023.	Amended time frame before making EP and the EP varied to allow this later date. Bus Charter now delivered.
2	RTI systems supplier cannot provide requested upgrades requiring the MCA to look outside the current contract and consider alternative procurement routes.	Feasibility study and engagement with partners to identify improvement plan which is now complete and being progressed.
3	The MCA does not currently hold contracts for many of the products and services required and capacity issues may exist to achieve these.	Work with the MCA Procurement Team to allocate sufficient resource and time to conduct procurement of products and services.



## **10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

- 10.1. BSIP Initiatives F3 and F4 are designed to improve local bus services by introducing travel guides, journey planning tools, and enhancing within journey information for bus passengers and through their delivery it is essential to ensure that all individuals can have a positive and seamless travel experience, irrespective of their age, disability, race, religion, or belief.
- 10.2. To address these concerns, the BSIP incorporates mitigations and justifications that will foster an inclusive and accessible public transportation system. An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) outlines measures to counteract any adverse effects and ensure that all passengers, regardless of their characteristics, can enjoy a positive and seamless travel experience where all individuals feel valued, respected, and supported in their journey, reinforcing the commitment to equitable and non-discriminatory service delivery.

## **11. COMMERCIAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS:**

- 11.1. There are various initiatives which have been implemented as part of BSIP for bus services which include but are not limited to: Demand Response Transport (DRT) through *WESTLink*, Fares Packages (Reimbursement Agreement, Birthday Offer, Care Leavers), and the Enhanced Partnership (EP).
- 11.2. The success of these initiatives is dependent on increased patronage across all local bus services in the MCA area and beyond.
- 11.3. The implementation of this initiative will improve the customer experience, satisfaction and will be relatable to any observed improvements in local bus service patronage numbers, with these further increasing revenue growth and bus operator and end user confidence in the MCA's approach and performance.

## **SIGNATORIES**

### **DECISION MAKER(S):**

**Signed: Gemma Dando, Assistant Director Neighbourhood and Transport, North Somerset Council.**

**Date: 12/02/2024**

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

**Date: 01/02/2024**

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

**Date: 13/02/2024**

