

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 DIRECTOR OF INVESTMENT AND CORPORATE SERVICES.

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

DECISION NO: 2023-BSIP-01

SUBJECT: BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) FUNDING FOR ENHANCED COMMERCIAL SERVICES

DECISION:

To approve the allocation of £10.005 million of the BSIP Intensive Services A1 work package allocation to deliver the enhancement of commercial services for a period of 24 months from 1 April 2023.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. Officers from the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (NSC) have consulted with senior representatives from First West of England, exploring the scope to enhance existing commercial bus services in line with the funding allocated from the BSIP to Delivery Plan A – Intensive Services within the joint BSIP.
- 1.2. Discussions with First West of England have resulted in two years of enhancements from April 2023 to the following services:

Y1/Y2 – Yate to Bristol – currently every 30 mins, proposed every 15 mins from September 2023
T1 – Thornbury to Bristol – every 30 mins prior to April, now every 20 mins
172 – Bristol to Bath via Midsomer Norton – replaces service 379 to provide, in combination with services 173, 174 and 522, a 12-minute frequency between Midsomer Norton and Bath
m2 – metrobus Long Ashton P&R to Bristol Temple Meads – every 20 mins prior to April, now every 15 mins
Separately North Somerset Council have run a tender process to secure the following:

X1 – Bristol to Weston-super-Mare –every 20 mins prior to April, now every 15 mins, From September 2023, extension of service to include Bournville Loop and clock face 15-minute timetable.

X4 – Bristol to Portishead – every 30 mins prior to April, now every 20 mins, Clockface timetable from September 2023

X5 – Portishead to Weston-super-Mare – additional journeys and introduction of Sat/Sun service from April, Autumn 23 re-route through Yatton, and Weston-super-Mare town extension to south road, Atlantic Road.

X6/7 – Bristol to Clevedon – extra early and late journeys from April

X8 – Bristol to Nailsea/Backwell – reintroduced from April to give Long Ashton a 15-minute frequency clockface service

W3/7 – Weston Town – extra evening and late services from April, with a review between First West of England and North Somerset Council for further developments, from September 2023 Weston 3 to be transformed into new commercial service 6 operating between Weston Interchange & Worle Retail Park via Upper Bristol Road as far as Milton Brow / Baytree Road. This service will give new direct links from this area of the town to Worle High Street or local amenities including both local doctors' surgeries. It will also give the same new links for the Verbena Way & Mead Vale areas of the town, operated commercially in the daytime, with initial support on evenings and weekends.

2. REASONS:

2.1. The BSIP includes the commitment to enhance existing commercial services and Department for Transport has provided funding on this basis. There are 5 main reasons to support commercial service enhancements from BSIP funding:

- Potential to increase passenger numbers in line with National Bus Strategy/BSIP objectives.
- Facilitate connectivity to urban centres from Demand Responsive Transport services and therefore operate as a complementary service.
- Assist with driver retention - buying service enhancements where we accept First West of England will have to retain agency drivers to do so and therefore these are costed in.
- Pump priming for sustained higher frequencies post BSIP, in line with the core Intensive Services objective in the BSIP.
- Assistance in counteracting anticipated roadworks disruption due to North Somerset Council BSIP and the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) capital.

FUNDING IMPLICATIONS:

3. Estimated Costs

3.1. The cost (subsidy) estimate is based on the medium-case growth scenario and reduces over the two-year BSIP funding window as patronage increases. The confidence to base the

estimate on medium growth is reflected in the significant growth in patronage seen in the region since April 2023 which is indicating a high growth scenario is the likely outcome.

3.2. The estimated costs of the enhanced services to be funded from the BSIP allocation for high (15%), medium (10%) and low (5%) passenger revenue growth scenarios are:

West of England Combined Authority Area	YEAR 1 (£m)	YEAR 2 (£m)	Total (£m)
High	£4.361	£2.722	£7.083
Medium	£4.439	£2.996	£7.435
Low	£4.517	£3.271	£7.788
North Somerset Council Area	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	Total (£m)
High	£1.855	£0.149	£2.005
Medium	£1.979	£0.590	£2.569
Low	£2.341	£1.051	£3.393
Combined (BSIP) Area	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	Total (£m)
High	£6.217	£2.871	£9.088
Medium	£6.418	£3.587	£10.005
Low	£6.859	£4.322	£11.181

4. FUNDING

4.1. Based on the medium growth scenario we estimate the scheme to come in below the agreed allocation. There is a £913K contingency in case growth scenarios are not achieved.

4.2. The movement in funding between years will need to be agreed with DfT.

5. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS:

5.1. On 1st July 2022 the West of England Combined Authority Committee delegated 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.

5.2. The recommended decision in this Report is to approve the allocation of £10.005 million for the BSIP A1: Intensive Services initiative, to deliver the enhancement of commercial services for a period of 24 months from 1 April 2023.

5.3. Notwithstanding the use of the word “subsidy” in the body of this Report, the arrangements referred to in paragraph 5.2 above are commercial-contractual in nature and for the avoidance of doubt do not engage the provisions of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 nor, for the reasons set out in detailed external legal advice, is West of England Combined

Authority required to run a public procurement process in relation to the application of these funds.

5.4. Legal Services will assist officers in completion of the necessary contractual documents.

5.5. NSC has followed its procurement route using the Dynamic Purchasing System and Quality Contract method

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS:

6.1. The MCA Climate Change and Environmental team has highlighted the following climate and environmental implications in relation to the enhanced commercial services.

6.2. The enhanced commercial services will have overall positive environmental impacts by leading to improved bus services and reducing car dependency. However, it is recommended to consider undertaking a high-level screening of potential environmental impacts, as there could also be negative impacts from increasing the number of buses on the road, for example on air quality. Noting, a slight increase in bus services is likely to have negligible environmental impacts.

6.3. The West of England Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan has three priority environmental themes: net zero carbon by 2030, nature recovery and climate resilience.

6.4. Net Zero Carbon - enhanced commercial services have the potential to contribute to net zero carbon by 2030 by providing bus services that help to reduce car dependency, however it could also contribute more emissions than necessary if the outcome is under used bus services. Enhanced commercial services should also provide data on carbon emissions and air quality, and this should be a requirement in the commissioning of the services. The project should consider undertaking a carbon management plan to identify opportunities to reduce the carbon associated with the bus services.

6.5. Nature Recovery -there may be the opportunity to consider the routing of services in relation to parks and other natural assets to help improve mental and physical wellbeing.

6.6. Climate Resilience - when procuring enhanced commercial services, the project may wish to consider the contract clauses for services during extreme weather.

6.7. Air quality is important locally and the impacts of the enhanced commercial services could be positive (e.g. reducing car dependency) or negative (e.g. more hyper local emissions from buses). Minor changes to routes could potentially improve air quality in hot spot areas, therefore the project should consider consulting unitary authority air quality officers.

7. CONSULTATION:

7.1. West of England Mayor, First West of England, North Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council Transport officers.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT:

8.1. Risks and mitigations for enhanced commercial services are outlined in the table below:

Risks	Mitigations
Costs and/or revenue are higher or lower than anticipated, leading to either overspend or underspend.	Quarterly review of passenger, revenue, and cost figures for each of the funded services.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

9.1. The conclusions from the Equalities Impact Assessment on the Enhanced Commercial Services states that The BSIP enhancement to commercial routes provides residents of the Combined Authority with improved access to local bus services across several inter-urban corridors, linking the major centres of Bath and Bristol with the main satellite towns of Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Yate and Thornbury and the wider rural populations located in Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The service frequency and the use of modern fully accessible buses promotes inclusive sustainable travel and reduced dependency on the private car to travel to employment, health, education and leisure facilities the region.

10. COMMERCIAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS:

10.1 Legally binding agreements between the Unitary Authorities (UAs) and the Bus operators (First Bus) on what enhancements will be made to bus services to ensure all parties are on the same page in relation to the requirements to be delivered.

10.2 Improved routes and higher frequencies will attract more passengers and reduce congestion and emissions.

10.3 Improved customer satisfaction which will support and build on trust between passengers and the UAs.

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed: Gemma Dando, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods & Transport, North Somerset Council

Date: 09/10/2023

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

Date: 28/09/2023

Signed: Rachel Musson, Director of Investment and Corporate Services, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority

Date: 06/10/2023