

**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 AND BSIP PROGRAMME MANAGER

**DECISION NO: 2023-BSIP-04**

**SUBJECT:**

ASSESSWEST: APPROVAL FOR:

- PROJECT INITIATION
- PROJECT SPEND
- PROCUREMENT OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES.

**DECISION:**

A decision is needed on the approval of up to £200,000, of the BSIP initiative I3: More supported services, to fund a technical report summarising the methodology used and the key outcomes, including high-level policy recommendations and contributions to net zero carbon and nature recovery consultant to work on AssessWEST for an expected duration of 6 months.

**1. BACKGROUND:**

1.1. Within the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) there is funding, under initiative I3, to increase support for non-commercial services whilst Demand Responsive Transport solutions are developed. A total of £5,854,516 has currently been allocated to this initiative to fund existing supported bus services. It has been recognised within the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and North Somerset Council (NSC) transport teams, that there is the need to undertake further work to make more informed decisions around the future bus network. AssessWEST is a transport planning project aimed at designing an optimised bus network.

Connectivity to other modes of transport will be a fundamental consideration.

1.2. AssessWEST will be used to inform decision making around the future bus network including decisions made through the Enhanced Partnership. It will be used to inform emerging policy documents, such as the Joint Local Transport Plan, and support future scheme business cases, such as the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

### 1.3. Project Deliverables:

1.3.1. A technical report summarising the methodology used and the key outcomes, including high-level policy recommendations and contributions to net zero carbon and nature recovery. The report should include the outputs:

- An optimised network - The future public transport network with consideration of what could form part of the core network of bus services. This may be used as part of the EP scheme negotiation process.
- Infrastructure Improvements - Identification of infrastructure improvements required to facilitate additional passengers and increase connectivity between modes of transport.
- Route alignments - A route and destination analysis of how well the bus routes serve key destinations, major housing, and employment areas. Specific consideration should be given to Bristol airport in terms of connectivity to the bus network.
- Route frequencies and timetabling - Map the bus corridors and frequencies. Consideration given to differences between patronage between Monday – Friday and the weekend including time of the day.
- Assess interchange - (bus-bus and bus-rail) and interchange modes with other modes of transport.
- Rural Services - How rural bus services can be sustainably integrated into the enhanced transport network (improving rural connectivity).

1.3.2. A multi-modal transport map, with environmental layers, created on layered mapping software (e.g., Geographical Information System). All digital project deliverables must be compatible with NSC's, and the MCA's IT systems. The project must also align with data sharing agreements.

## 2. REASONS:

2.1. The reasons for developing AssessWEST are as follows:

- AssessWEST can provide a better understanding of which supported bus services should be funded.
- AssessWEST will identify gaps in the wider transport network, which could highlight where future projects should be focused.
- AssessWEST will inform policy making and negotiations with bus operators.
- AssessWEST is important for ensuring that bus networks meet the changing needs and expectations of customers and communities, as well as supporting the wider goals of reducing congestion, improving air quality, and promoting social inclusion.
- AssessWEST can also help to maximise the use of available resources and funding for bus services, especially in times of financial pressure or uncertainty

## 3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

	<b>Option</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>
1	Do nothing	Nil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AssessWEST will not be progressed, and the project terminated.</li></ul>	Reject this option

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced understanding of the current bus network and how to plan in the future.</li> <li>• Reduced evidence based to develop future policies and projects.</li> </ul>	
2	Give approval to Initiate AssessWEST project	Estimated £200,000.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project is formally approved to deliver the scope detailed in the Project Initiation Document.</li> <li>• Mandate to spend up to £200,000 to procure the services of a consultancy for a 6-month commission</li> </ul>	Approve this option

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

### 4. Costs

4.1. The project cost is estimated to cost up to £200,000 to cover consultant time.

### 5. Funding

5.1. The project will be funded from BSIP Delivery Plan I3: More supported services.

5.2. The funding envelope is £200,000, including a 10-15% risk contingency. The AssessWEST project team has engaged with the MCA Finance team and explained the project, purpose, and proposed outcomes.

5.3. The Finance team is content that the project has been agreed with the Department for Transport and included within the latest funding envelope. There is a £200,000 budget in place for 2023/24.

### 6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. A decision is required on the allocation of up to £200,000 (plus VAT) of the BSIP initiative I3, to fund a consultant to work on AssessWEST for an expected duration of 6 months.

6.2. Appendix 12 of the MCA's Contract Standing Orders ("CSOs") (Scheme of Delegation) gives power to the Strategic Director of Infrastructure to approve this expenditure.

6.3. The total contract value (£240,000 inc. VAT) is above the current threshold (£213,477 inc. VAT) at which the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("Regulations") are engaged.

6.4. The contract will be procured via a mini competition under the MCA's Professional Services Framework Agreement, which is a compliant procurement route under the Regulations and the CSOs.

6.5. Under the CSOs, the Contract Award Report must be approved by the MCA's CEO (Chief Executive Officer), s73 Officer or Monitoring Officer and the contract must be sealed by the Monitoring Officer on behalf of the MCA.

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

7.1. AssessWEST has engaged with the MCA Climate Change and Environmental team and explained the project, purpose, and proposed outcomes.

7.2. AssessWEST is likely to have overall positive environmental impacts by leading to improved bus services and reducing car dependency. However, there could also be negative impacts on the environment from new or improved bus infrastructure which AssessWEST recommends, therefore a high-level screening of the potential environmental impacts could be undertaken to enable tweaks to avoid such impacts.

7.3. 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.

7.4. Net Zero Carbon: AssessWEST has 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. Therefore, a high-level carbon management plan incorporating carbon modelling should be undertaken as part of this work, engaging the environment team in the specification, options development, and decision-making for AssessWEST.

7.5. Nature Recovery: AssessWEST could provide opportunities for better access to nature (including parks) improving physical and mental wellbeing for people in the region and contributing to social and economic value. Therefore, AssessWEST should explore the opportunities to incorporate the mapping of natural assets, as destinations and connectivity options e.g., green corridors.

7.6. Climate Resilience: AssessWEST modelling should consider incorporating flood risk layers to understand bus route vulnerability to flooding as this will affect regional climate resilience. The risks of heatwaves will also increase, therefore AssessWEST may wish to consider sensitivity testing walking distances to bus stops under heatwave conditions, if walking distances are part of the AssessWEST modelling.

7.7. Air quality is a priority issue for Unitary Authorities (UAs), and similar to carbon, this could get better or worse depending on the AssessWEST option selection. Therefore, modelling the impact of bus routes on air quality is an important consideration.

## 8. CONSULTATION

8.1. (Formal consultation is not a requirement of this project)

8.2. Consultation that has taken place for the AssessWEST project 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 PROJECT:</b>
MCA: Head of Integrated Transport Operations as BSIP Senior Responsible Officer, 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 Officer, Transport Officers.
UAs: Bath and North East Somerset Council Transport Officers, Bristol City Council Transport Officers, South Gloucestershire Council Transport Officers.

<b>UA ENGAGEMENT:</b>
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	Scope is too broad which could complicate delivery and impede progress.	Early engagement has been undertaken with stakeholders to manage expectations.
2	There is a risk that a delay to approval may reduce the time a consultancy has to conduct project work.	Working closely with commercial to commission consultant as soon as possible.
3	The outcomes of the work become political and are challenged by stakeholders.	A working group is formed to shape the project as it progresses.

## **10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and signed off by the BSIP Programme Manager, as summarised below:

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

11.1. AssessWEST has engaged with the MCA Commercial team and explained the project, purpose, and proposed outcomes. The Commercial team supports the AssessWest project based on the reasons below:

- A bus network review will help identify and address the gaps or opportunities in the bus network, such as new developments or travel patterns that require new or improved bus services which may require tenders for new bus services.
- A bus network review can help to maximise the use of available resources and funding for bus services, especially in times of financial pressure or uncertainty.
- A bus network review can also help to maximise the use of available resources and funding for bus services, especially in times of financial pressure or uncertainty.
- A bus network review can also require significant data sharing and collaboration between the MCA and bus operators which will need to be managed accordingly.
- A bus network review can create opportunities for joint planning and delivery of bus services across different areas, as well as for securing additional funding or support from central government or other sources.
- A bus network review can also create expectations or obligations for the MCA to deliver certain levels or standards of bus services, as well as to monitor and evaluate their performance and impact. Efficient and effective key performance indicators and service level agreements to be included in future contract documents to ensure these standards are maintained

**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: 04/10/2023**

