

**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, AND WEST OF ENGLAND MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY HEAD OF INTEGRATED TRANSPORT OPERATIONS

**DECISION NO: 2023-BSIP-07**

**SUBJECT:** BUS PASSENGER CHARTER AND BUS PASSENGER SAFETY AUDIT

**DECISION:**

- To approve the allocation of £50K from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) award to finalise, implement and operate the Bus Passenger Charter, between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2025.
- To approve the allocation of £30K from the BSIP award to conduct a Bus Passenger Safety Audit and publish the report after completion.

**1. BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1. Two key initiatives under the BSIP programme include Initiative H1: Bus Passenger Charter and Initiative H2: Bus Passenger Safety Audit.

**Bus Passenger Charter**

- 1.2. The National Bus Strategy states that BSIPs are expected to drive improvements for passengers by committing to a Bus Passenger Charter that sets out what passengers can expect from bus operators delivering local bus services across their area. In response, the West of England BSIP, and the Enhanced Partnership (EP) Scheme commits to developing a Bus Passenger Charter; a comprehensive document that outlines the commitments made by the Local Transport Authorities (LTAs), Local Highway Authorities (LHAs) and bus operators.

- 1.3. The Bus Passenger Charter should set out the standards that passengers can currently expect when using bus services within the West of England region, including

commitments on punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, accessibility, information, redress, and customer service. The charter should also set out how passengers can provide feedback to LTAs, LHAs and bus operators if they feel these standards are not being met.

- 1.4. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and North Somerset Council (NSC) have collaborated with LHAs and bus operators to develop the current version of the Bus Passenger Charter. Transport Focus, the UK's principal passenger representative organisation, have also provided feedback on the current version of the Bus Passenger Charter.
- 1.5. The current version of the West of England Bus Passenger Charter was adopted by the EP Board on 7 September 2023.
- 1.6. After adoption, a stakeholder engagement process will be implemented to continue working with bus operators, LHAs, and passengers/passenger advocacy groups to embed the Bus Passenger Charter across the region, including delivering a promotional campaign to raise awareness of the Bus Passenger Charter to the public. Through the stakeholder engagement process, stakeholders will also work together to continue enhancing the Bus Passenger Charter commitments. It will be an evolving document that will be updated annually, as a minimum.
- 1.7. An annual report will be produced that will report on delivery of the Bus Passenger Charter commitments. This report will be made publicly available.

### **Bus Passenger Safety Audit**

- 1.8. The BSIP bid contains the ambition to improve passenger safety, by ensuring there is a safe environment at all stages of the passenger's journey, including at bus stops, on board and walking to and from bus stops.
- 1.9. To improve passenger safety, a Bus Passenger Safety Audit will be conducted that will review the following:
  - Walking routes to bus stops
  - Waiting environments
  - Staffing and procedures, both on the bus and at bus stations
  - Customer relations
  - Bus information provision.
- 1.10 The table below highlights key activities and deliverables that will be undertaken as part of the Bus Passenger Safety Audit, as outlined in the BSIP bid document. The exact scope of the Bus Passenger Safety Audit will be developed in collaboration with bus operators and LHAs.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>
<b>Bus Stops</b>	A safety audit of bus stops within the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a template for delivering bus stop safety audits.</li> </ul>
<b>Walking routes to bus stops</b>	A review of walking routes to bus stops to identify if they are well-lit and support natural surveillance, especially if served by evening and night buses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations of walking routes to prioritise for future investment and/or maintenance.</li> </ul>
	Conduct desk-based research to review and update current guidance sent to developers to ensure suitable access for bus services to new developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles that can be shared with Local Planning Authorities to integrate into guidance for developers on providing suitable access for bus services to new developments</li> </ul>
	Conduct desk-based research to consider improvements that could be made to existing walking routes to bus stops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations on infrastructure improvements for walking routes to bus stops.</li> </ul>
<b>The waiting environment</b>	Conduct a review of bus stations to identify if there is a good range and standard of facilities available and identify if the sites are staffed and monitored appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations for bus station owners on how they can improve bus station facilities.</li> <li>• Recommendations for number of staff needed to ensure the bus stations are appropriately staffed and monitored.</li> </ul>
	Conduct research into the feasibility of providing Help Points at bus stops in places where waiting passengers may feel vulnerable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feasibility report on installation of Help Points at bus stops.</li> </ul>
<b>Staffing and Procedures</b>	Conduct a review of current training provided to bus drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations for bus operators on how to improve bus driver training to incorporate better provision on safety.</li> </ul>
<b>Customer Relations</b>	Identify what 'code red' procedures bus operators implement to summon emergency services assistance quickly in the event of a serious incident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations on how 'code red' procedures can be improved.</li> </ul>

<b>Information provision</b>	Identify improvements that can be made to the quality of information for bus users, to reassure them about safety issues such as when the bus will arrive at the stop and details of the route taken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations on how information for bus users can be improved to reassure them about safety issues.</li> </ul>
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- 1.11 Stakeholder involvement is important for the successful delivery of the Bus Passenger Safety Audit, therefore the MCA and NSC will work closely with LHAs, the police and other relevant stakeholders to deliver the work.
- 1.12 A report will be produced and shared with relevant stakeholder, to support implementation of the identified recommendations. In addition, certain recommendations may form new EP Scheme commitments that will be put to the EP Board for approval and integration into the EP Scheme.
- 1.13 For more information on the BSIP programme, including contextual information, refer to Appendix 1.

## 2. REASONS:

### Bus Passenger Charter

- 2.1. There is currently no Bus Passenger Charter that covers all bus services within the West of England region. At present some bus operators have their own customer charter, but these only cover their services. The purpose of the Bus Passenger Charter is to produce a document that clearly sets out the standards that passengers can currently expect, as a minimum, when using bus services within the West of England region. Additionally, the Bus Passenger Charter will set out how passengers can feedback to the LTAs, LHAs and bus operators if they feel these standards are not being met, including offering a mechanism for redress when these standards have fallen short.
- 2.2. The Bus Passenger Charter and Bus Passenger Safety Audit aim to improve passenger satisfaction with bus services within the West of England. One of the BSIP targets is to increase passenger satisfaction to 89% for 2025 and 95% for 2030. Please note that there are multiple BSIP initiatives that aim to achieve this passenger satisfaction target; the Bus Passenger Charter is one of the initiatives that can contribute towards reaching the target.

### Bus Passenger Safety Audit

- 2.3. The BSIP bid contains the ambition to improve passenger safety, by ensuring there is a safe environment at all stages of the passenger's journey, including at bus stops, on board and walking to and from bus stops.

### 3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

3.1. Options considered are outlined in the table below:

	<b>Option</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>
<b>1</b>	Do nothing	£0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing the Bus Passenger Charter and conducting the Bus Passenger Safety Audit are both EP Scheme commitments. Not delivering on EP Scheme commitments opens the MCA and NSC up to legal challenge.</li> <li>There is no agreed minimum standard of bus service for the region.</li> <li>No improvements made to safety of bus passengers using services within the region.</li> </ul>	Reject
<b>2</b>	Approve the funding allocation	£80K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of key EP Scheme commitments.</li> <li>Agreed minimum standard of bus services for the region.</li> <li>Identified recommendations for how bus passenger safety can be improved. In addition, certain recommendations may form new EP commitments.</li> </ul>	Approve

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

#### 4. COSTS:

4.1. Implementing and finalising the Bus Passenger Charter is estimated to cost £50K. The table below outlines the proposed costs for the Bus Passenger Charter:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Graphic design of materials	£5,000
Dissemination of materials	£3,000
Printing of materials	£2,000
Launch campaign	£25,000
On-going promotional campaign	£10,000
Contingency	£5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£50,000</b>

4.2. Conducting the Bus Passenger Safety Audit is estimated to cost £30K to cover a consultant's time.

## **5. FUNDING:**

5.1. Initiative H1: Bus Passenger Charter (£50K) and Initiative H2: Bus Passenger Safety Audit (£30K) budgets have been agreed with the Department for Transport.

## **6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS:**

6.1. On 1 July 2022, the West of England Combined Authority Committee delegated to the MCA Strategic Director of Infrastructure and MCA Strategic Director of Resources, 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 MCA Chief Executive in consultation with the Unitary Authority CEOs.

6.2. The following two decisions are authorised by the delegation referred to in paragraph 6.1 above:

- To approve the allocation of £50K from the Bus Service Improvement Plan award to finalise, implement and operate the Bus Passenger Charter, between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2025.
- To approve the allocation of £30K from the BSIP award to conduct a Bus Passenger Safety Audit and publish the report after completion.

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

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. The Bus Passenger Charter should consider including a section on the environmental performance of buses. The Bus Passenger Safety Audit should consider a section on environmental and natural hazards, including air quality, heat, flooding and storms.

## **8. CONSULTATION:**

8.1. Consultation that has taken place is outlined in the table below:

<b>INFORMED:</b>
MCA: West of England Metro Mayor, Mayor's Office, Interim Head of Integrated Transport Operations as BSIP Senior Responsible Owner.
NSC: Leader, Head of Transport as BSIP Senior Responsible Owner.
EP: EP Board members, EP Advisory Panel members.

<b>ACTIVE WITHIN THE PROJECT:</b>
MCA: BSIP Programme Manager, BSIP Transport Operation Officers, BSIP Project Managers, BSIP Senior Communication and Marketing Officer. 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: Transport Officers, Marketing and Communication Officer.
Unitary Authorities (UAs): Bath and North East Somerset Council Transport Officers, Bristol City Council Transport Officers, South Gloucestershire Council Transport Officers.
Other: Bus operators, police, passengers, and passenger advocacy groups.

<b>UA ENGAGEMENT:</b>
UAs have played an active role in reviewing and commenting on the current version of the Bus Passenger Charter. They will have a further role in helping to embed and enhance the charter. The UAs will also have an active role in shaping the Bus Passenger Safety Audit.

## 9. RISK MANAGEMENT:

9.1. Risks associated with the projects are outlined in the table below:

	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
1	Recommendations from the Bus Passenger Safety Audit are not implemented by LTAs, LHAs or bus operators and therefore no improvements are made to passenger safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MCA and NSC will work closely with bus operators and LHAs when developing the scope for the Bus Passenger Safety Audit, to ensure the outcomes have a positive impact for the region.</li> <li>Outcomes of the Bus Passenger Safety Audit will be integrated into the EP Scheme so that partners are committed to implementing recommendations.</li> </ul>
2	Bus operators, LHAs and LTAs do not comply with the Bus Passenger Charter commitments, resulting in the minimum standard of service not being met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bus Passenger Charter is written into the EP Scheme; therefore, partners are committed to upholding the charter commitments.</li> <li>LTAs will provide briefing notes and briefing sessions to support bus operators and LHAs implementing Bus Passenger Charter commitments.</li> <li>Delivery against Bus Passenger Charter commitments will be monitored, and an annual report will be produced that will report on delivery of the commitments.</li> </ul>

3	The Bus Passenger Charter is not thoroughly promoted and therefore the public are unaware of the level of service they should expect when using bus services within the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive promotional campaign for the Bus Passenger Charter will be delivered, including promoting the charter at bus stops, on buses and at key locations where members of the public will see it.</li> </ul>
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**10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

**Bus Passenger Charter**

- 10.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for Initiative H1: Bus Passenger Charter (Appendix 2) indicates that the current version of the Bus Passenger Charter can be accessed by everyone, regardless of background and characteristic. The implementation of the Bus Passenger Charter is expected to have positive impacts on bus passengers across diverse backgrounds and characteristics. By adhering to the commitments, service providers will enhance the travel experience, accessibility, and safety for all passengers, thereby promoting equality and inclusivity in public transportation. The Bus Passenger Charter is not a legally binding document and can only reflect the current level of service provided by commercial LTAs, LHAs, and bus operators.
- 10.2 Based on the outcome of the EQIA (Appendix 2), it is recommended to proceed with the adoption of the Bus Passenger Charter; ensuring that the commitments are consistently upheld and monitored for their impact on different protected characteristics. In addition, this EQIA will be a live document that will be updated at key delivery points.

**Bus Passenger Safety Audit**

- 10.3 An EQIA will be completed for the Bus Passenger Safety Audit once the scope of the audit is agreed with LTAs, LHAs and bus operators.

**11. COMMERCIAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS:**

- 11.1 The Bus Passenger Charter focuses on service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency, while the Bus Passenger Safety Audit emphasizes passenger safety, risk mitigation, and compliance. Combined, these initiatives can positively impact the corporate image of the MCA.
- 11.2 A well-executed Bus Passenger Charter that focuses on improving the passenger experience can attract more riders. Increased ridership can lead to higher ticket sales and revenue for the LTAs.



**SIGNATORIES:**

**DECISION MAKER(S):**

**Signed: Gemma Dando, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods & Transport, North Somerset Council  
Date: 21/12/2023**

**Signed: David Gibson, Strategic Director of Infrastructure, West of England Mayoral Combined  
Authority  
Date: 27/12/2023**

**Signed: Rachel Musson, Director of Resources, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority  
Date: 13/12/2023**

