

Transport and the Environment Board

10 February 2022

Bus Enhanced Partnership Governance Arrangements

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
<i>Reason why exempt:</i>	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	Not a Key Decision

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Executive Summary

The National Bus Strategy guidance issued by the DfT in 2020 set out the requirement for MCAs and LAs to develop ambitious service improvement plans and enter statutory delivery arrangements, to access transformational funding for buses. In response, the MCA submitted a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to Government on 29 October 2021 and began the process of entering an Enhanced Partnership. Part of this process includes establishing an Enhanced Partnership Board, which will oversee the delivery of the Enhanced Partnership work programme.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

The establishment of an Enhanced Partnership Board will ensure the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme are kept under review and delivering the improvements outlined in the BSIP. This will deliver a better bus system for the residents, visitors and businesses within South Yorkshire.

Recommendations

That the Board considers the content of this report.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

None

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the Enhanced Partnership process, suitable governance arrangements should be put in place to ensure accountability to, and by, the Partners and wider stakeholders. DfT guidance suggests that the governance arrangements should build upon any existing arrangements and those put in place to prepare the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership itself.
- 1.2 In developing the governance for the South Yorkshire Enhanced Partnership, there are important considerations to be made regarding accountability, structure and representation. Any arrangements should have clear links to the MCA and deliver the National Bus Strategy aim of improving passenger representation.
- 1.3 One of the Enhanced Partnership Board's key roles will be to agree the annual work programme of the Partnership, as well as shaping and developing additional Enhanced Partnership Schemes or variations for the MCA and reporting on progress against targets. The TEB would receive recommendations from the Enhanced Partnership Board for elements of the programme that fall within its remit.
- 1.4 To ensure that the Partnership Board is set up in time for the start of the Enhanced Partnership in April 2022, it is recommended that the Board start to operate in shadow form from early 2022.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 In developing the governance for the South Yorkshire Enhanced Partnership, there are two important considerations.

Accountability - Given the importance placed on improving bus services in the Transport Strategy and by the MCA, any arrangements should have a clear and accountable link to current MCA governance structures. This is also critical given that much of the capital funding to deliver the Enhanced Partnership will come through devolved funding allocations.

Representation - The National Bus Strategy has a stated intention to improve passenger representation on how bus services can and will be improved and BSIP Activity 20 includes a commitment to seek "wider passenger representation in the development of future bus policy" as well as the delivery of the BSIP.

In developing governance arrangements for the Enhanced Partnership Board it is important that both accountability and representation are addressed.

- 2.3 To ensure both accountability and representation are covered fully within the Enhanced Partnership governance structure, whilst also enabling commercially

sensitive discussions to take place, the governance arrangements for the Enhanced Partnership could consist of two separate elements:

- An Enhanced Partnership Board, could consist of the Mayor as Chair, the Council Leader with responsibility for transport as co-chair of the Transport and Environment Board, appropriate Director of the MCA, a representative from the wider stakeholder community, guest attendees by invitation and representatives of the bus operators. This would have a clear link to the MCA's Transport and Environment Board within the existing MCA structure.
- An Enhanced Partnership Forum, consisting of key stakeholders representing bus passengers, local businesses, accessibility groups, academic institutions and neighbouring authorities – this would act as a “reference group” for the work of the Partnership Board and is based on the approach taken with the Bus Review Commissioners.

In line with the Enhanced Partnership Scheme commitment, the creation of the Forum should be complete no later than 30 June 2022, therefore once operational, establishing this forum could form one of the Board's first tasks.

2.4 A key consideration in forming the governance structures for the Enhanced Partnership Board is the frequency with which members would be expected to meet and the remit of the group. Meeting on a quarterly basis should be of sufficient frequency to enable the Board to oversee the delivery of the Enhanced Partnership. Examples of the Board's remit include the following:

- Agreeing the annual work programme of the Partnership each year
- Considering any proposed changes to the work programme suggested by the Partners
- Responsibility for publishing the six-monthly update on progress towards the agreed targets
- Acting as a reference point for the annual update of the BSIP
- Agreeing the Customer Charter and monitoring its implementation
- Receiving and discussing the operator proposals for major service changes twice each year and the annual fare changes
- Setting up the proposed Enhanced Partnership Forum
- Developing and implementing the common branding across the South Yorkshire transport network
- Provide review and feedback on the delivery of any further elements of the Bus Improvement Programme agreed by the MCA in January 2020 (“the 7-Point Plan”)
- Where consensus cannot be reached, the Board should escalate risks that could impact on agreed budgets and delivery timescales.

- 2.5 It is proposed that the work programme would be recommended by the Partnership Board to TEB for adoption each year, once funding allocations for the upcoming year are confirmed. TEB could then lead on the delivery of the elements of the work programme that fall within its remit. This provides a forum for local authorities to shape and oversee bus improvement activities.
- 2.6 To ensure that the Partnership Board is set up in time for the start of the Enhanced Partnership in April 2022, it is recommended that the Board start to operate in shadow form from early 2022.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

The Enhanced Partnership Board and Forum comprise two separate boards and address the issues of accountability and representation.

3.4 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

There is a risk that having separate Boards could disrupt the flow of information and ideas between them and may not fully address Government's aim of increasing passenger participation in bus policy delivery. To mitigate this, a representative from the forum could sit on the Enhanced Partnership Board to directly represent passenger interests.

3.5 Option 2

One Board is established that incorporates both the Forum and Board representatives.

3.8 Option 2 Risks and Mitigations

Creating a single board that incorporates both Forum and Board representation would present risks regarding the full participation of partners, particularly when commercially sensitive issues require discussion. A single board would also be large and could impact the meeting frequency and in turn the ability of the Board to deliver the Enhanced Partnership work programme. It is therefore recommended that a Board and a Forum are established which would mitigate this risk.

3.13 Recommended Option

Option 1

4. Consultation on Proposal

- 4.1 Discussions are planned with operators, partners and stakeholders regarding representation on the Enhanced Partnership Board. Once representatives have been identified, the final structure and remit will be submitted to the MCA for consideration alongside proposals for the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme in March.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 In order to meet the Enhanced Partnership timescales outlined by DfT, it is proposed that the Board assembles in shadow form prior to the Enhanced

Partnership Plan and Scheme being formally made by the MCA in March, ahead of launching in April.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

- 6.1 There are no direct costs associated with the formation of the Enhanced Partnership Board. The resources required to administer the board will be considered within SYMCA's business planning process.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

- 7.1 Suitable governance arrangements are a requirement set out by DfT in their Enhanced Partnership guidance. By creating a Board the SYMCA will be complying with this guidance and will ensure that the Partnership has effective Governance structures in place to monitor and manage its delivery.

SYMCA recognises the importance of passenger representation in decision making and has therefore committed to the establishment of a Forum, no later than 30 June 2022, in our Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

- 8.1 None as a consequence of this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

- 9.1 The creation of a separate Forum offers the flexibility to incorporate the views of a wide range of groups. Building in the views and advice from a wide range of passenger representation groups will improve the delivery of the region's bus services and ensure that they better meet the needs of passengers across South Yorkshire.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

- 10.1 The Enhanced Partnership Board will be responsible for shaping and delivering the Partnership work programme and therefore have the opportunity to propose measures that will improve the contribution of the region's bus network to net zero. This could be through the provision of lower emission vehicles on some routes and also by increasing patronage and thereby reducing the reliance on private cars.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

- 11.1 None as a consequence of this report.

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

- 12.1 None as a consequence of this report.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None