

Committee/Board Name and Date of Meeting:
Education Skills and Employability Board

Meeting Date:
12 December 2022

Report Title
South Yorkshire Bus and Coach Driver Training and Retention Programme
Proposal

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

Director Approving Submission of the Report:
Jim Dillon, Director of Business and Skills

Report Author(s):
Adam Greenwood, Assistant Director Employment & Skills
Adam.Greenwood@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk

Executive Summary

Bus service reductions that have been incredibly disruptive for residents and businesses are deep rooted systemic issues that require a broad range of action to address and one such issue is that of the supply and retention of **bus and coach drivers** in the SYMCA area.

This paper proposes an approach that will increase the supply of bus and coach drivers within South Yorkshire with a particular focus on SME operators. The proposal also supports the retention of drivers within operators in South Yorkshire.

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

The training will enable a greater supply of bus and coach drivers in South Yorkshire, creating benefits of greater connectivity and a more resilient driver workforce. The proposal also increases the opportunities for residents who may not have previously considered a career in the Public and Commercial Vehicle sector.

Recommendations

That the board:

1. Agree to the use of £385,000 AEB funds and to allow authority to commission the project

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

Transport and the Environment Board

15 December 2022

1. Background

- 1.1 There is a national shortage of bus drivers, with significant operational challenges in the South Yorkshire region (c210 driver shortage from bus operators alone based within South Yorkshire) and high turnover rates. Impacts range from disruption to scheduled bus services to no bids being received for tender.
- 1.2 The Passenger Service Vehicle (PSV) industry faces interlinked labour challenges including:
 - Pay and working conditions are deterring new entrants and impacting on retention of existing drivers, many of whom are reconsidering careers post-pandemic or are affected by the current economic conditions.
 - Recent delays to licensing and testing have stymied recruitment into the industry.
 - The pandemic has also impacted via sickness/isolation, change in personal circumstances, early retirements, etc.
- 1.3 Pressures on the haulage industry have led some bus drivers to switch to logistics roles, due to higher rates of pay and different working conditions. This is further compounded by bus drivers being less willing to work early mornings, late evenings and weekends.
- 1.4 A significant number of South Yorkshire vacancies reside in large operators, who have their own training programmes, but are struggling to recruit. The remainder are located in local SMEs who face similar challenges and also lack the resources and in-house driver training programmes needed to urgently fill current vacancies.
- 1.5 A scheme has been developed in the North East, and refined in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority that takes a staged process to engaging with residents and supporting potential bus drivers through to achieving their licence and taking up roles in the local market. The West Yorkshire scheme began delivery in spring 2022 and has achieved significant success in engaging potential bus drivers, often through word of mouth and family connections, and is already over achieving on its outputs.

2. Bus and Coach Driver Training and Retention Programme

2.1 Building on the success of similar programmes in the WYCA and in the North East, it is proposed to create a programme that widens the opportunity for South Yorkshire residents to consider a career in bus and coach driving. A three stage programme is proposed that aims to increase the supply of bus and coach drivers and supports operators to retain their new staff from the programme.

Stage 1. An awareness raising and myth busting campaign and training programme (minimum 250 learners)

Stage 2. An SME Bus driver training programme leading to PCV certification/licence (minimum 50 learners)

Stage 3. Programme alumnus networking sessions for a period up to 6 months from completing the programme and driver retention planning from operators that have benefitted.

2.2 A group of officers from across relevant areas of the MCA have consulted with key stakeholders to determine the demand for and the suitability of the proposed programme. In particular, CPT which represents a wide range of passenger transport employers, and training providers.

The project proposes to use £385,000 of Adult Education Budget to procure a training provider to deliver the project. Delivery is intended to commence from 1st April 2023.

2.3 The proposal includes the development of an awareness course and campaign to improve the understanding of the reality and job opportunities for bus and coach drivers within South Yorkshire and link participants directly to SMEs and large operators that have vacancies for further professional training.

The training programme will provide residents with the on the job and professional accreditations needed to enter into work and link them directly to SMEs that have live vacancies for interview.

The programme will also provide links into the Bus Enhanced Partnership Board by requiring operators that have benefitted from the programme to develop driver retention action plans that help to mitigate the loss of talent in the region.

2.4 It is intended that participants must be resident in South Yorkshire, aged 19+ and eligible for AEB funding as per the [SY AEB Funding and Performance Management Rules](#).

Learners can be unemployed or employed. For this training project, the learner's current employment status will not affect their eligibility or the funding rate.

2.5 Intended outputs from the project include:

- Promotional campaign to attract candidates to the occupation

- 250 South Yorkshire residents completing the awareness raising programme
 - 60% progression to further training opportunities
- 50 South Yorkshire residents completing the SME Bus driver training programme
 - 80% progression to employment in Passenger transport SMEs
- 30 South Yorkshire residents participating in networking sessions
- Retention action plan in place for each operator benefitting from the programme
- Interim and final report on impact, challenges and lessons learned

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

Do not approve the recommendation and do not progress the proposal.

3.2 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

There is a risk of continued long-term lack of trained bus and coach drivers limiting the success of operators in delivering services to residents.

3.3 Option 2

Approve the recommendation - progress the proposal.

3.4 Option 2 Risks and Mitigations

The Authority increases the supply of skilled bus and coach drivers but has limited impact on retention.

3.5 Recommended Option

Option 2

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 If the Board approves the proposal preparations for procurement will need to be made to commence by April 2023.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

- 6.1 We will need to procure the programme. It is recommended we begin the procurement process as soon as possible to avoid any delays. Funding for this scheme will come from existing amounts which are currently unallocated within the budget.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

- 7.1 N/A

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

- 8.1 N/A

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

9.1 Appropriate equality and diversity considerations are taken into account as part of the assessment of the programme delivery models.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

10.1 Climate change impact will be assessed as part of the process for proposed activity.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 N/A

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 N/A