

## Enhanced Partnership Board

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

### Update on Bus priority measures

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

**Director Approving Submission of the Report:**  
 John Dowie, Executive Director Infrastructure and Place

**Report Author(s):**  
 Nick Brown, Project Director, Bus Partnerships

#### Executive Summary

Delivering a programme of bus priority measures is a key part of the Enhanced Partnership (EP) programme. It reflects that reducing the impact of congestion on buses simultaneously makes bus use more attractive, encourages mode shift from the car, and helps to make bus services financially more sustainable.

South Yorkshire is fortunate in having significant levels of capital funding, primarily under the TCF and CRSTS funding programmes, to implement bus priority measures.

This report outlines that the larger capital projects to improve bus priority are largely being implemented successfully. However, certain schemes in Sheffield have attracted considerable controversy and there has been less progress in developing and implementing a more comprehensive programme of smaller bus priority measures. In part, this reflects resourcing and capacity issues within the relevant authorities. Nonetheless, efforts are currently being made to reinvigorate District level discussions on bus priority measures, to ensure that the funds available are fully utilised in this important part of the overall EP programme.

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

The Enhanced Partnership has been created to achieve a step change in the performance of the bus network in the South Yorkshire region. In time, its success will significantly enhance the passenger experience for public transport users. This in turn will support growth in bus patronage, and help it to achieve long-term financial sustainability.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1 Board members note the update provided in this paper.
- 2 All partners continue and step up engagement on delivering bus priority programmes at the district level, to maximise the benefits to bus services and ensure that available funds are fully utilised.
- 3 Once identified, additional bus priority schemes are added into future variations to the EP Scheme.
- 4 The EP Board receives regular reports on delivery of bus priority programmes.
- 5 A senior level meeting is arranged between SYMCA and the four Local Authorities together to discuss the bus priority programme.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper updates the Board on progress with delivering bus priority measures in South Yorkshire, and encourages partners to step up the programme of delivery.

### 2. The importance of delivering bus priority measures in achieving mode shift and a financially sustainable bus network

- 2.1 Providing buses with priority through congestion is an important way to improve bus punctuality, in combination with other measures such as rescheduling, driver recruitment and speeding up boarding times. Bus priority can deliver shorter journey times, so reducing the number of vehicles required to operate a service frequency, allowing frequency increases or redeployment of resources elsewhere. Enabling buses to avoid the worst areas of congestion is also a powerful and visible way to attract car drivers to using the bus, while simultaneously making bus services less expensive to operate. For this reason, implementing bus priority measures is one of the key components of the EP programme. SYMCA has been successful in recent years in securing government funding for a programme of bus priority measures under the TCF and CRSTS funding programmes.

- 2.2 Providing buses with priority can include a number of options:
- Creating new bus lanes and junction improvements, either by reallocating existing road space or by adding new capacity
  - Extending the operating hours for existing bus lanes, reflecting that the peak periods for congestion are widening
  - Increasing the enforcement of bus lanes (and other offences that impede buses). This relates primarily to unauthorised vehicles using bus lanes, and illegal parking. Enforcement may be aided by traffic regulations to introduce red zones and other measures; by Councils seeking moving traffic enforcement powers under the Traffic Management Act; and through the use of camera technology.
  - Signal priority – either for late running buses, or for all buses.

- Bus gates to restrict other users from specific parts of the network.

2.3 The introduction of bus priority measures can be unpopular with some sectors of the community. In particular:

- Some car drivers and other road users may object to priority being given to buses, particularly where road space is reallocated to a bus lane.
- Drivers that break bus lane regulations by using or parking in bus lanes and are subject to enforcement action are unlikely to be supportive.
- Local businesses may object to bus lanes and parking restrictions if they consider these will impede footfall to their businesses, or their ability to load and unload goods.
- Residents may be concerned about access to their properties, and their ability to park.

2.4 Nonetheless, it is essential that ways are found to give buses priority through congestion, as making buses more attractive to car users and achieving mode shift is such a fundamental part of the transport strategy for the region. Where necessary, measures will need to be identified to mitigate the effect on those negatively impacted. Without significant mode shift, we can expect buses to continue to require high levels of public funding if core networks that meet the needs of those that have no choice but to use the bus are to be maintained.

2.5 It is important that measures are focused on locations where they can make the greatest difference. This is a combination of where congestion levels and delays to buses are the greatest (congestion hotspots); and the bus routes that carry the greatest number of people. SYMCA is developing the key public transport routes network that will help in the prioritisation process. SYMCA and bus operators also now have the ability to use bus tracking information to identify congestion hotspots and to correlate this information with bus route patronage information to determine where bus priority measures will be most effective.

### 3. Delivery of the EP bus priority programme

3.1 The EP has made a significant commitment to delivery of bus priority measures:

The EP Scheme contains the following commitments:

<b>Enhanced Partnership Scheme Components</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>
A61 bus priority road widening scheme	SYMCA	31/03/2024
A630 Doncaster bus scheme with traffic signal technology	SYMCA	30/04/2023
New iPort bridge	SYMCA	31/03/2024
Improving bus service punctuality in Barnsley	BMBC/ SYMCA	31/03/2023

The Refreshed EP contains the following:

<b>Refreshed EP Components</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>
Bus priority – £35m TCF and £103m CRSTS funding directed to key bus bottlenecks, supported by improved data hot-spot analysis	Councils/ SYMCA	After November 2023

Consistent bus lane operational times (0700 - 1900, 7 days) with camera enforcement	Councils	By November 2023
---	----------	------------------

### 3.3

Progress to date is summarised as follows:

- The four identified projects in the EP Scheme are all on target, other than Phase 2 of the A61 bus priority scheme which has been deferred due to land assembly issues. There are some risks of delay on the A61 Phase 1 scheme, in part to the potential discovery of otters in the vicinity.
- There has been slower progress in delivering a wider programme of smaller bus priority measures.
- In some cases, the momentum behind bus priority and congestion hotspot discussions at District level with Councils and operators has stalled during the Covid period. Where this is the case, these are being reinvigorated.
- There remain unallocated funds in the CRSTS programme. We have started a process to allocate this funding to appropriate bus priority and wider bus improvement measures.
- We are not aware of any changes to bus lane operational times since the EP started.
- Doncaster has introduced digital enforcement provisions at various bus gates and bus lanes across the City Centre. Plans to improve enforcement with additional cameras in Sheffield are under consideration.
- Three of the four Councils (Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster) have started the process to take on additional moving traffic offence enforcement powers under the Traffic Management Act. This will assist enforcement for some bus priority-related offences in the future, if granted by Parliament.
- Sheffield City Council has actively pursued a programme of signal priority measures. Work on adopting a similar approach in other districts has started.
- Certain schemes in Sheffield in particular have attracted significant controversy, we need collectively to work together to make the case, including demonstrating the benefits for bus users, and develop mitigation measures for those negatively affected.

## 4. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1 Board members note the update provided in this paper.
- 2 All partners continue and step up engagement on delivering bus priority programmes at the district level, to maximise the benefits to bus services and ensure that available funds are fully utilised.
- 3 Once identified, additional bus priority schemes are added into future variations to the EP Scheme.
- 4 The EP Board receives regular reports on delivery of bus priority programmes.
- 5 A senior level meeting is arranged between SYMCA and the four Local Authorities together to discuss the bus priority programme.

## 5. Consultation on Proposal

5.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

## 6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

**7. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

7.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only. Any financial implications resulting from schemes and proposals referred to in this paper will be subject to their own financial and policy approval processes (e.g. through Transport and Environment Board).

**8. Legal Implications and Advice**

8.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

**9. Human Resources Implications and Advice**

9.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

**10. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

10.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

**11. Climate Change Implications and Advice**

11.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

**12. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

12.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

**13. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**

13.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

**14. List of Appendices Included**

14.1 None