

Enhanced Partnership Board

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Update on EP programme delivery

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

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Executive Summary

The Enhanced Partnership (EP) has agreed to a range of deliverables and commitments to improve bus services in South Yorkshire, consistent with the aspirations in the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP and EP Plan also established a number of headline indicators and targets for the performance of the bus network that would be used to measure progress.

It is proposed to start each EP Board meeting with a standard report outlining progress against:

- the specific deliverables in the published EP Scheme.
- the additional commitments in the Refreshed EP programme agreed by the EP Board on 29 November 2022.
- the bus network performance targets set out in the BSIP and EP Plan.

This is the first of these reports. It shows that while there has been progress in some areas of agreed delivery, there is a significant slippage in the delivery of a number of agreed actions. Particular areas of concerns relate to network development, bus priority measures, and the simplification of ticketing. Overall, the headline performance indicators show only slow improvements in patronage and punctuality which remain below the agreed targets.

The paper proposes an increased pace of delivery. It also proposes making a further formal variation to the EP Scheme, and a report back to the SYMCA Transport and Environment Board.

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 slippage in the delivery of the EP programme reported in this paper, and the slow improvement of performance indicators which in all instances remain below the agreed targets.
- 2 All partners in the EP are again strongly encouraged to step up the delivery of agreed measures. Without comprehensive delivery, it is likely that agreed targets will not be reached, and the bus network will continue in a state of crisis.
- 3 Operators inform the EP Board of their plans to grow the network by trialling new services or service enhancements on a commercial basis.
- 4 The Board agrees that a formal variation to the EP Scheme is commenced, and brought back to the next EP Board meeting.
- 5 The EP Board reports to the next Transport and Environment Board with an outline of progress based on this and other papers at this Board meeting.

1. Background

- 1.1 This paper updates the Board on progress against
- the specific deliverables in the published EP Scheme
 - additional commitments in the Refreshed EP programme agreed by the EP Board on 29 November 2022
 - the bus network performance targets set out in the BSIP and EP Plan.

2. Analysis

- 2.1 The EP Scheme is a document published under Section 138G (1) of the Transport Act 2000. It sets out a range of deliverables to improve bus services in South Yorkshire. The EP Scheme was signed on 1 April 2022, one year ago, and has since been subject to two formal variations. **Appendix 1** provides a progress report on delivery of the EP Scheme.
- 2.2 In addition, on 29 November 2023 the EP Board agreed a series of further and accelerated commitments in the Refreshed EP programme, although these have not been formalised into the EP Scheme. **Appendix 2** provides a progress report on delivery of these commitments.
- 2.3 Performance of the network against the EP targets is summarised in the latest EP performance dashboard in **Appendix 3** (to February 2022). This shows:
- passenger journeys at 61m per year (against a target of 77m)

- punctuality at 78.9% (against a target of 95%)
- reliability at 97.5% (against a target of 99.5%)
- passenger satisfaction at 89% (data from Autumn 2019 against a target of 92%)

2.4 These Appendices show that there has been good progress in some areas, such as:

- some of the major capital programme projects (eg A630 Doncaster bus scheme, iPort bridge and Barnsley hotspots)
- the installation of new bus shelters and real time displays
- progress in the procurement of 27 new electric buses in the Stagecoach fleet and 11 electric community transport minibuses
- investment in new ticketing equipment in the First fleet
- the development of a passenger charter.

However, there is a significant slippage in the delivery of a number of agreed actions. Particular areas of concern relate to:

- network development
- punctuality improvements, particularly bus priority measures outside those listed above
- the simplification of ticketing.

2.5 As reported in the previous EP Board, there have been some particularly difficult set-backs to the ambition set out in the EP Plan. Key amongst these are:

- the slow patronage recovery from Covid (currently still at only 80% of pre-Covid levels), and the impact this has had on farebox revenue
- the impact of increasing driver, fuel and other costs
- the consequent service reductions in October 2022 and fare increases applied in January 2023 by some operators, and the use of SYMCA reserves to reinstate some services.
- the failure of the SYMCA's bids for BSIP and LUF funding.
- continuing uncertainty over government funding, despite a recent short-term extension to the Bus Recovery Grant and £2 fare cap.

2.6 It is disappointing that a number of the agreed deliverables have slipped. The aim of the EP programme is to reverse this negative spiral by improving bus services, attracting new users, and bringing more revenue into the system for reinvestment in new and better services. Only by doing so are we likely to achieve a financially sustainable bus network over the medium to long term.

2.7 This paper does not propose any further initiatives or measures. Instead, it challenges all parties to provide the required focus, resources and commitment to deliver the programme of measures that has already been agreed.

2.8 In relation to the areas of particular concern listed in paragraph 2.4 above, there are separate papers at this EP Board meeting on the bus priority programme and ticket simplification. This paper seeks commitments from operators to grow the network by trialling new services or service enhancements on a commercial basis.

3. EP Scheme variation

- 3.1 Given the areas of slippage in the EP Scheme, it is proposed to start the process of developing a third formal variation to the EP Scheme. This variation will also be an opportunity to include new items, drawing from the Refreshed EP programme. A proposed variation will be brought back to the next EP Board meeting in May for approval. Specific areas where variations are proposed are highlighted in bold in Appendix 1.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

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- 2 All partners in the EP are again strongly encouraged to step up the delivery of agreed measures. Without comprehensive delivery, it is likely that agreed targets will not be reached, and the bus network will continue in a state of crisis.
- 3 Operators inform the EP Board of their plans to grow the network by trialling new services or service enhancements on a commercial basis.
- 4 The Board agrees that a formal variation to the EP Scheme is commenced, and brought back to the next EP Board meeting.
- 5 The EP Board reports to the next Transport and Environment Board with an outline of progress based on this and other papers at this Board meeting.

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

Appendix 1 Progress with EP Scheme deliverables

Appendix 2 Progress with Refreshed EP deliverables

Appendix 3 EP performance dashboard (February 2023)