

## Enhanced Partnership Board

Friday, 03 November 2023

### Update on EP programme delivery

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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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#### Director Approving Submission of the Report:

Pat Beijer, Interim Executive Director Infrastructure and Place

#### Report Author(s):

Nick Brown, Project Director, Bus Partnerships

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#### Executive Summary

This report provides an update on progress against agreed Enhanced Partnership (EP) project deliverables and targets.

#### 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 Board members:

1. Note the progress in the delivery of commitments in the EP programme and performance against agreed network targets provided in section 1.2 of this paper.

2. Discuss and provide guidance on how the issues and challenges raised in paragraph 1.3 of this paper might be addressed.
3. Receive an oral update at the Board meeting on the emerging implications for buses in South Yorkshire of the following two government policy changes:
  - Network North
  - Plan for Drivers

## 1. Progress against EP commitments and targets

### 1.1 This paper updates the Board on progress against:

- The specific deliverables in the published EP Scheme (Appendix 1)
- Additional commitments in the Refreshed EP programme agreed by the EP Board on 29 November 2022 (Appendix 2)
- The network performance targets set out in the BSIP and EP Plan (Appendix 3).

### 1.2 The following are areas of progress:

#### *Satisfaction with bus services*

- Transport Focus, the government funded body that assesses public satisfaction with bus services and other forms of public transport, has published an interim national report for 2023 on satisfaction with bus services. This draws on research from January to June 2023. We have also been provided with a subset of the results for South Yorkshire.
- Appendix 4 contains the South Yorkshire headline results compared to national and other metropolitan areas. This demonstrates that South Yorkshire largely reflects the national picture, with satisfaction in South Yorkshire with overall bus services (82%), drivers (87%) and journey time (83%) all slightly above the national average. This is welcome, particularly given the low level of government funding for South Yorkshire compared to other regions.
- The 82% result for overall satisfaction with bus services compares to the EP target of 92%. It should be noted that the last equivalent result before this was 89%, but this dated from 2019 as surveys were not carried out in the Covid period. The 82% level in the recent survey suggests that while there is still a good way to go, the results are encouraging.
- It should also be noted that this survey is of bus users, and contrasts with SYMCA's own travel survey, which involved a sample drawn from all residents (ie bus users and non-users). The last SYMCA travel survey from Autumn 2022 has overall satisfaction with bus services much lower at 47%. We do not know whether the marked improvement in the latest survey is caused by the fact that one is of bus users, the other includes non-users; or due to improvements in perceptions of bus services. It could also be that public expectations on what a service should be are falling.
- We will gain more insight into this when the next SYMCA travel survey, and the full year Transport Focus reports, are both published in early 2024. The Mayor's "Fair Deal" public transport funding roadshows are also throwing light on public satisfaction levels with bus services.

### *Bus priority*

- The delivery of bus priority measures continues. Of the main TCF-funded projects, the i-Port bridge project is on target for completion in December 2023. The Parkgate projects has experienced a range of on-site issues such as the discovery of contaminated sludge and steel slag, but is nevertheless progressing. On the ground delivery of the A61 project has been delayed due to extended land negotiations with adjacent landowners, and other site issues, but work is expected to start in February. Discussions over the Sheffield South-West corridor proposals continue.
- Under the CRSTS programme, a wide range of local authority-led bus priority projects are in various stages of design, and progress is discussed with operators at regular bus priority coordination meetings.
- A significant project to resurface Sheffield and Meadowhall bus interchanges is due for completion on 23 October 2023.
- SYMCA has been working with local authorities to allocate the remaining CRSTS BSIP improvement fund (£16m). This is likely to fund a balanced programme of measures including additional bus priority schemes, bus shelters, real time displays, and ticket vending machines. A package will be presented to the MCA Board for approval in the near future.

### *Network coverage*

- SYMCA has been progressing work with local authorities on establishing trials of Demand Responsive Transport and other ways to provide cost-effective accessibility to individuals and communities. Although still at the planning stage, these are likely to be launched in the next 6-9 months.
- Operators have in some cases increased their commercial footprint to offset the loss of service frequency on some routes as a consequence of the recent retendering process and the funding constraints on tendered services.

### *Punctuality*

- Timetable adjustments made as a consequence of First's use of Prospective scheduling software have started to be implemented. The next few months will demonstrate the impact on punctuality, and it is hoped will show significant improvements.

### *Information and ticketing*

- The further extension of the government £2 fare cap to December 2024 will continue to reduce travel costs and simplify ticket purchase for many people in South Yorkshire for the next 14 months. It offers a valuable opportunity to market bus services to non-users.
- Work to model the costs and benefits of discounting the SY Bus TravelMaster ticket, as a step towards ticket simplification, continue. It is hoped to provide an oral update on progress at the Board meeting. As previously reported, further progress on this is likely to require a source of new funding.
- First and Stagecoach have agreed to introduce their own commercial £1.50 fare for 18–21-year-olds, given the end of the Zoom Beyond product on 1 November.

- An improved TSY mobile phone-accessible live departure/real time information system has been developed and released on the TSY website, with growth in usage over 30% since its introduction. The focus is now on using the system to provide feedback to operators on which vehicles are not tracking, so that overall system performance can be improved. This work will also benefit the accuracy of other 3<sup>rd</sup> party real time information sites.
- Work on the TSY retail and information app continues, with the app due to be launched in March 2024. This will initially focus on tram ticket retailing, but can be expanded to include information and bus ticket sales. The work includes a ticket “gifting” function. This will provide an efficient way to target concessionary travel to specific groups and individuals in the future, if required. It also provides personal security benefits, so that (for example) a parent can purchase a valid ticket for a child remotely to enable them to travel.
- Surveys to identify customer information needs and behaviours, and inform future technology investments are currently being undertaken across interchanges.

#### *Zero emissions fleet*

- Work to deliver the Zebra 1 electric bus programme continues, with the first Stagecoach electric bus due to be delivered in January 2024. An order will also be placed in the near future for the electric community transport vehicles. The installation of charging infrastructure for both projects is proceeding.
- The government has announced a second round of Zebra funding. SYMCA is working with operators to progress a bid, which must be submitted by the end of December.
- First is trialling electric buses in South Yorkshire.

### 1.3

The following are key areas where progress is behind the aspirations set out in the BSIP and EP documents, and/or where bus services have experienced significant setbacks:

#### *Funding*

- The underfunding of South Yorkshire bus services by government, when compared to other areas, has led to tendered service reductions, ending of Zoom Beyond and an increase of the child notified fare to £1. All are due to come into force in late October/early November. These changes can be expected to impact the mobility of some individuals and communities.
- The Mayor has been engaging local communities in a dialogue about this underfunding through the “Fair Deal” public transport funding roadshows. These events highlight the impact on individuals and communities of the low level of government funding for bus services in South Yorkshire.
- It remains a major challenge to secure the funding required from government to implement the BSIP, EP Plan, and achieve equity with the funding going to other regions.
- The announcement of HS2 northern leg being scrapped, and the creation of the “Network North” proposal by government may present an opportunity, with a commitment to “provide over £700 million to fund a new wave of Bus Service Improvement Plans in the North”.

### *Marketing*

- As previously reported the EP Marketing programme, which was to have been funded with contributions from operators, SYMCA and local authorities, has been put on hold due by SYMCA to concerns over the quality of the bus product, and lack of behavioural insights and data on target audiences. We will need to review whether this funding is utilised in the remaining months of this financial year, or repurposed for other things.
- The bus promise has not yet been launched. The EP Forum has expressed concerns over the delay.

### *Anti-social behaviour*

- Increased levels of antisocial behaviour have been experienced in some areas. In Thurnscoe, this has led the operator withdrawing the service after 6pm and for this arrangement to be in place indefinitely. Although multiple agencies have been involved in trying to tackle this issue, it remains an intractable and concerning problem where the actions of a small number of individuals have significant adverse effects on local communities.
- A trial to prevent an increase in anti-social behaviour at Barnsley Interchange is currently being conducted with additional security deployed daily between 3pm and 11pm.
- A verbal update on the latest position on measures to address anti-social behaviour will be given in the meeting.

## **2. Government Policy Changes**

2.1 The government has recently made two major government policy announcements which could have a profound impact on the Enhanced Partnership and the delivery of the BSIP:

1. The decision to scrap the northern parts of HS2, and the associated announcements of funding for various projects and initiatives under the DfT “Network North” document.
2. The “Plan for Drivers” policy document.

At the time of writing, officers are assessing how these will impact the Enhanced Partnership, and the delivery of improved bus services in South Yorkshire. By the time of the Board meeting, we hope to have a better understanding of some of the implications of these policy changes.

## **3. Recommendations**

3.1 It is recommended that Board members:

- 1 Note the progress in the delivery of specific commitments in the EP programme and performance against agreed network targets provided in section 1.2 of this paper.
- 2 Discuss and provide guidance on how the issues raised in paragraph 1.3 of this paper might be addressed.
- 3 Receive an oral update at the Board meeting on the emerging implications for buses in South Yorkshire of the following two government policy changes:

- Network North
- Plan for Drivers.

#### **4. Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 No financial or procurement decisions are recommended in this paper. Any financial implications resulting from schemes and proposals referred to in this paper will be subject to their own financial and policy approval processes.

#### **7. Legal Implications and Advice**

7.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **8. Human Resources Implications and Advice**

8.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

9.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **10. Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

11.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**

12.1 Not applicable as a discussion paper only.

#### **List of Appendices Included:**

1 Progress with EP Scheme deliverables

2 Progress with Refreshed EP deliverables

3 EP performance dashboard (September 2023)

4 Extract from Transport Focus 2023 interim survey results on satisfaction with bus services