

Report to: **Partnership Board - Transport for the South East**

Date of meeting: **21 March 2022**

By: **Lead Officer, Transport for the South East**

Title of report: **Technical Programme Progress Update**

Purpose of report: **To provide a progress update on the ongoing work to identify the future ambition for bus services in the TfSE area, implementation of TfSE's Future Mobility Strategy and TfSE's current work on decarbonisation.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to:

- (1) Note the progress with ongoing work on defining the future ambition for bus services in the TfSE area;**
 - (2) Note the work that has been initiated on the implementation of TfSE's Future Mobility Strategy; and**
 - (3) Note progress with TfSE's ongoing decarbonisation work.**
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1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the work taking place to support the development of Bus Service Improvement Plans, the work that has been initiated on the implementation of TfSE's Future Mobility Strategy and TfSE's ongoing work on decarbonisation.

2. Bus Back Better

2.1 Bus Back Better, the national bus strategy launched in March 2021, required local transport authorities (LTAs) to submit a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport (DfT) by 31 October 2021. The purpose of a BSIP is for each LTA is to set out its vision for delivering the step-change in bus service provision that is being sought by the national strategy. Following BSIP submissions, it was originally intended Enhanced Partnership (EP) contracts would be set up with bus operators by the end of March 2022.

2.2 The intention is that BSIPs will help the DfT identify the funding requirements that will be needed in future years to deliver these ambitions and to assist them in making the case to the Treasury to secure these funds. On 11 January, DfT wrote to all LTAs in connection with their BSIP submissions. The letter indicated a national budget of £1.4 bn for bus transformation (including BSIP implementation) over the next three years. The level of ambition from all 79 BSIPs across England was considerably in excess of that; prioritisation of spend is therefore inevitable. DfT expected that details of indicative BSIP funding for each LTA would be available by February. At the time of writing this report LTAs were still waiting to hear about the level of funding they had been awarded.

2.3 Also, DfT amended the timescales for full EP arrangements. Draft EPs would now be needed by the end of April 2022 and full EPs would be given more time – to a date to be announced at the same time as the decision on BSIP funding allocations.

2.4 The TfSE Transport Strategy identified the key role that the bus will need to play in delivering its 2050 vision. Bus patronage will need to more than double if this vision is to be achieved. The ongoing work on the area studies is confirming the enhanced role that buses will need to play in realising this vision. As mentioned in previous reports to the Board, TfSE commissioned Steer to undertake technical work to produce a regional evidence base to identify in more detail what future, long-term bus service provision might need to look like. This will provide TfSE and its constituent LTAs with a regional evidence base to support a robust case to central government for greater investment in buses and complementary measures across the region.

2.5 Although the work is substantially complete, further analysis is required before presentation to the Board. A draft final report setting out the outcomes of the work has been shared with the members of the Transport Strategy Working Group and a number of public transport officers from across the region for their comments. A copy of the finalised report taking account of their comments will be presented to the next meeting of the Board in June 2022.

2.6 The technical work that has been undertaken includes the following:

- Assembly of an evidence base, in three sections:
 - Supply: summarising the region’s existing bus routes and frequencies and establishing base data for analysis.
 - Demand: presenting historic and current bus demand using DfT bus statistics, providing a basis for comparison and benchmarking, and reviewing the known impacts of Covid on bus demand.
 - Potential: presenting results from analysis of potential bus usage from the regional perspective, to help determine places and corridors for particular attention in the future.
- Use of a GIS map database for capturing, analysing and presenting relevant information.
- Assessment of potential bus-based interventions and improvements using the SEELUM transport demand model – including potential costs and revenue (and possible subsidy requirements) in four different scenarios.

2.7 The outcome of this work will be to provide additional insights to LTAs as they enter into EPs with bus operators. BSIPs are meant to be reviewed annually, so the work will provide a broadened evidence basis for “BSIP2”. The work will also be used to strengthen the evidence base for bus-based proposals in TfSE’s Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). The study report will be finalised following feedback from LTAs and endorsement by Board.

2.8 Further work is being planned and procured to support LTAs with the implementation of their BSIPs and EP development as part of the additional in-year funding that has been identified by the DfT for STBs. The scope of that work is set out in agenda item xx, which gives a progress update on the DfT and STB additional workstreams.

3. Future Mobility Strategy Implementation

3.1 In July 2021, the Partnership Board agreed the TfSE future mobility strategy and action plan. The scope of a self-contained package of further work has been discussed

and agreed with consultants WSP, who developed the strategy. This package of work will deliver a number of elements from the adopted action plan.

3.2 Commissioning of that work has been waiting on agreement of detailed terms of contract with WSP, following expiry of the contract to provide the future mobility strategy. This has now been resolved so that the work can now commence with the aim of having it completed by the end of June 2022. It is hoped that there will then be resources available within TfSE's funding award from DfT for 2022/23 to continue that work. For the longer term, funding was identified in TfSE's Comprehensive Spending Review bid for resource to lead this work. At the time of writing we have yet to be advised of our financial settlement.

3.3 The new work to be commissioned from WSP will include:

- undertaking workshops with local authorities to present the future mobility strategy and identify their potential roles, responsibilities and actions;
- holding further meetings of the future mobility forum to guide the implementation of the action plan;
- identifying potential locations and partners for further piloting of future mobility interventions;
- scoping possible development of a future mobility tool that would enable local authorities to identify which future mobility interventions will be most appropriate for the different travel needs of people and places in their areas.

3.3 An update on the progress with this work will be given at the next Partnership Board meeting in June 2022.

4. Decarbonisation

4.1 In July 2021 the Government published its Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) setting out a path to net zero transport in the UK by 2050 and the principles that underpin the approach to delivering it. The strategy identifies a key role for local transport authorities in delivering place-based approaches to transport decarbonisation. The TDP also identifies a key role for STBs in supporting the Government's decarbonisation objectives "*by joining up local plans across a wider geography, to capitalise on economies of scale and ensure coherence across local authority borders*".

4.2 In June 2021 TfSE established the South East Regional Transport Decarbonisation Forum for local authority officers to share best practice, identify areas for joint working and oversee TfSE's work on decarbonisation. The forum has met five times and bi-monthly meetings have been scheduled throughout 2022.

4.3 TfSE have commissioned Steer to undertake the technical work to identify a carbon budget for the TfSE area and pathways to achieve zero emissions for surface transport in each of the constituent authority areas as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of existing and future policies that would need to be pursued to follow the identified pathways. The work is nearing completion but the draft final report will need to be shared with the Transport Strategy Working Group for comment before it can be finalised. The outcomes of the work will therefore be reported to the Partnership Board at their meeting in June 2022.

4.4 Further work is being planned on decarbonisation as part of the additional in-year funding that has been identified by the DfT for STBs. The scope of the work that is going to be taken forward on decarbonisation using this funding is set out in agenda item xx that provides an update on the DfT and STB additional workstreams.

5. Financial considerations

5.1 The costs of the work to identify the future ambition for bus services (£42,500), the future mobility implementation work (£20,000) and the carbon budgeting and pathways work (£42,500) are being met from the 2021/22 DfT grant settlement.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 The Partnership Board is recommended to note the progress being made with the work on defining the future ambition for the bus network in the TfSE area, the implementation of the future mobility strategy and TfSE's work on decarbonisation.

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