

Report Title	Quarterly Bus Update
Portfolio Holder	Transport and Air Quality
Summary of decision being sought	None – for noting and information only
Is this report exempt?	No
Local Authorities affected	All
Impact and implications of this report	None – for noting and information only
Financial impact	No
Delegation (s) sought	No
Supporting the Corporate Plan	A Fairer City Region ✓
	A Stronger City Region ✓
Tick/x as appropriate	A Cleaner City Region ✓
	A Connected City Region ✓
	A Vibrant City Region ✓
Climate Change Implications	No
Equality and Diversity implications	No
Social Value implications	Yes - see paragraph 4.1
Human Resources implications	No
Physical Assets implications	No
Information Technology implications	No
Legal implications	No
Risk and Mitigation	No
Privacy implications	No
Communication and consultation implications	No
Contact Officer(s)	Matt Goggins, Assistant Director: Bus Laura Needham, Bus Strategy Programme Officer
Appendices	Yes
Background Documents	No

LCR TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 November 2022

REPORT OF MERSEYTRAVEL

QUARTERLY BUS UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Transport Committee on key bus issues relating to the second quarter of 2022/23.
- 1.2 Specifically, the report will provide an update on the milestones of the Bus Alliance, report progress on the assessment into Bus Reform, Hybus Trial Project and Green Bus Routes Programme, along with an overview of how the Bus Team continues to work with bus operators to support the recovery of the region's bus network and implementation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Transport Committee note the contents of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Post-Covid Bus Network Review
 - 3.1.1 In response to the proposed ending of government covid-related funding, changes were made to the Merseyside Bus Network, which came into effect on 4 September 2022.
 - 3.1.2 Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the bus industry received financial support from central government in the form of Covid Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG). This funded operators and authorities to continue providing services throughout periods of lockdown to ensure key workers could still travel. This was superseded by Bus Recovery Grant (BRG), which was focussed on bus operators and authorities continuing to operate existing frequency levels to encourage passenger recovery but also support the wider economic recovery.
 - 3.1.3 The BRG funding period was extended until April 2023 to allow local authorities to work with bus operators and carry out network reviews to enable the development of create a sustainable network – able to operate without government funding.

3.1.4 Through working closely with Arriva, Stagecoach and other operators of commercial services in the region, Merseytravel sought to influence changes proposed. Where changes or withdrawals were put forward by operators, alternative services were found thus maintaining network coverage and reducing the impact on the customer.

3.1.5 Unlike other areas, the Combined Authority coordinated a consultation for bus operators to engage with stakeholders and members of the public on the proposals in order to gain feedback, the table below show the impact of the consultation and Merseytravel discussions in the final network:

No.	Original operator proposals for network changes	Further details	Revisions following consultation and Merseytravel negotiation
1	2x withdrawals	Both services had low patronage.	1x withdrawal was reconsidered - LCRCA funding continued the operation of the 37 to a revised route and timetable that also helped to maintain the frequency on the sections of the 38. The X3 was withdrawn but the Kirkby section was replaced with extended 17 journeys.
2	5x routes merged/combined with other routes removing duplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service 227 was proposed to be merged with the 217 to give a 20 minute service rather than combined 15 minutes. Service 30 was proposed to be merged with service 17 to operate a 30 minute frequency. This level of provision was unchanged on the unique sections but on the majority of the common sections there were other services. Service 98/98A was proposed to be merged with service 97/98A to operate a 35 minute frequency. Services 44 & 49 were proposed to be merged/revised into a new network of routes in the Southport area. 	2x route mergers were reconsidered (44 & 49).
3	16x daytime frequency reduction (some reduced only on a Saturday)	LCRCA funding was agreed to continue the 76, 78 & 492/495 operating at their 30 minute frequencies. Funding was also agreed to maintain the 204 at every 30 minutes and the 61 at every 40 minutes.	7x frequency reductions were reconsidered (58, 76, 78, 300, 310, 352, 492/495). An agreement could not be reached for the 61 & 204 services in time for the September change but will be reinstated at a later date.
4	10x evening frequency reduction (some only on a Sunday)	Services reducing from every 30 minutes to every 60 minutes.	
5.	6x route changes (5 positive)		1x route change revised – 79 short journeys were amended to terminate at Woodlands Road rather than Belle Vale.
6.	3x frequency reinstatements	Stagecoach reinstated frequencies on services 10A, 38, 471 that had been reduced temporarily due to driver availability.	
7.			1x timetable was revised to better meet shift times (17)

3.1.6 Overall, approximately 71 per cent of Merseyside services were due to remain unchanged. In the last twelve months Arriva and Stagecoach have made a number of frequency reductions on high frequency routes due to reduced driver availability. The majority of these remained in place from September 2022 as the frequency reduction reflected the current passenger demand.

- 3.1.7 In addition to the changes made to the commercial bus network, a large number of supported bus contracts across Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton & Wirral were due for renewal on 4 September 2022 and went through a procurement process. Due to budget limitations some frequencies were reduced, and a number of services changed operator.
- 3.1.8 A full list of service changes from 4 September 2022 can be viewed at Appendix 1: Merseyside Network Confirmed Changes 4 September 2022.
- 3.1.9 When comparing the mileage operated from September 2022 to the mileage operated in January 2020 there has been a reduction of approximately 15%. In the main this is accounted for by frequency reductions on higher frequency services, which as noted in paragraph 3.1.6 began to be introduced in response to driver availability over the past year.
- 3.1.10 Current patronage levels, compared to the equivalent in 2019 (pre Covid) are averaging at 85 per cent (above 100% for young people, 70% for concessionary and 85% for fare paying passengers).
- 3.1.11 Since the revised network was registered, the government has confirmed additional financial support for the bus industry in an effort to remove the “cliff edge” that was speculated to be created in many areas. In reality, many areas are still experiencing cuts in service despite this funding.

3.2 The Bus Service Improvement Plan and Bus Back Better

- 3.2.1 In 2021 the Government published its first national bus strategy – *Bus Back Better*. This strategy required transport authorities to develop and adopt BSIPs as local plans for bus improvements, including a bid to government for funding support.
- 3.2.2 The Combined Authorities BSIP was submitted to the Department for Transport in October 2021. The BSIP process requires an annual update to take place, or confirmation that the BSIP remains unchanged. Given the progress and change over the past 12 months, particularly in terms of bus reform, developing bus priority measures, fare reductions and network changes, an updated BSIP has been developed for consideration of approval by the Combined Authority on 18 November 2022.
- 3.2.3 The Combined Authority submitted a bid alongside the 2021 BSIP of £667 million to support the ambitions set out in the BSIP. This was in line with government guidance to be “bold and ambitious”, advising of £3 billion funding for BSIPs. Funds made available by Government were around £1.08bn allocated to support BSIPs. Only 31 of the 79 submitted BSIPs received any funding.

The Combined Authority was indicatively allocated £12.2m of revenue funding, alongside a much larger City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) allocation for bus priority measures, in support of the region’s BSIP ambitions. In June 2022 the Combined Authority agreed that the revenue funding should be focused on reducing the cost of bus travel for the region’s residents, specifically

- introducing a £2 single fare cap,
- maintaining the cost of *Myticket* at £2.20,
- future support for the implementation of “tap-and-go” ticketing and
- a marketing and communications campaign to encourage take up of the new £2 capped single fare.

3.2.4 In August 2022 the Combined Authority was informed that it had been offered a confirmed revenue funding allocation of £12,294,398 from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to support the delivery of the BSIP.

3.2.5 The capped £2 adult single fare was launched on Sunday 18 September 2022, accompanied by a marketing campaign, and subject to continued funding, will be in place for three years.

3.2.6 As required under BSIP guidance, initial work to review the BSIP, following its submission, has been completed by the Combined Authorities Bus and Policy teams. As a result it is planned that the BSIP will undergo a limited update to reflect changes in language and tense the funding that has been subsequently received (specifically CRSTS and BSIP) and actions taken such as implementing the £2 adult single fare, placing the Hybus order and the decision taken to pursue bus franchising as the preferred option. The overarching aims and intentions of the BSIP remain current. It is planned that this reviewed BSIP will be brought to the Combined Authority in November 2022.

3.3 Bus Reform

3.3.1 In March 2022 the Combined Authority supported recommendations to progress the process to reforming bus services, with franchising as the preferred option for reform.

3.3.2 As required by The Bus Services Act 2017, an independent audit of the completed assessment of bus franchising in the Liverpool City Region commenced in August 2022. The results of this review will form part of a planned report to the Combined Authority in March 2023.

3.4 Green Bus Routes

3.4.1 During Q2 the focus of the Green Bus Route (GBR) programme on the 10A route has been on the finalisation of the bus priority 1:1250 scale drawing package, preparation for public engagement and modelling.

3.4.2 A public engagement plan, stakeholder mapping, public facing collateral and CommonPlace site have been developed in collaboration with local authorities in preparation for public engagement which is planned to take place in November 2022. *Groundswell* will provide research support to gather baseline information around the sentiment of peoples’ journeys to the bus stop. This data will be used to inform the detailed design phase of the 10A corridor.

- 3.4.3 An updated package of 1:1250 bus priority drawings was issued to the Combined Authority containing elements of enhanced active travel where space permits. The consultant design team are currently reviewing comments and will issue the final package of drawings in Q3.
- 3.4.4 An award for the independent review of modelling and economic appraisal methodology used on the 10A GBR project is now complete, with Royal Haskoning DHV (RHDHV) now appointed. They have delivered an interim report which is being reviewed by the consultancy team who will provide a response.
- 3.4.5 The GBR Programme Team are in the process of developing the detailed design brief for the 10A route. This commission will progress the preliminary design work carried out by Waterman to detailed design stage, and subsequently lead into the procurement exercise for the construction stage of the route. An initial meeting has been held with the Procurement Team to start the procurement aspect of the detailed design element. It is envisaged that a new consultant will be in place to commence with the detailed design aspect in January 2023.
- 3.4.6 Engineering Consultants RHDHV have been appointed as the consultant for the commission of the 86 & 56 Options Appraisal Report.
- 3.4.7 Liaison has taken place to share required information with the consultant team. Requests have been sent to Liverpool and Sefton to share information. A Social Value meeting was held to discuss the proposed deliverables as part of this commissions. RHDHV are in the process of putting a plan together outlining how they will deliver added social value in this commission.
- 3.4.8 2022/23 Development Funding application has been approved and team are awaiting Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) to be issued following sign off. Engagement with the Local Authorities regarding resource is ongoing and this is being progressed via GFA based on agreed costs. Bus Priority Lead Officer is due to start in post in October 22. This is a commission with ProjectCentre. This will bolster the programme team with individuals that are experienced in delivering similar schemes in other areas.

3.5 LCR Hybus Project

- 3.5.1 The first images of the interior of the new, zero-emission hydrogen bus fleet were released in this quarter (See appendix 2), with CGI visuals providing a view of the hi-spec interiors and features which passengers on the new vehicles will be able to experience when they come into service in quarter 4. The vehicles will carry a range of special features, including wireless and USB phone charging, internet access and reading lights above seats. The buses will be some of the most accessible in the country, with increased capacity for wheelchair users and passengers with prams or buggies. Other new features include camera wing mirrors to improve safety, as well as audio and visual announcements for next stops and high-definition onboard screens to update passengers on journey progress in real time. Screens will display information about onward connections as the vehicles approach train and bus stations, allowing passengers to more easily transfer between different modes of travel.

- 3.5.2 ADL provided a demo bus in METRO Livery for the Labour Party Conference in September, which was well received, and the project team will be undertaking factory visits early in quarter three to inspect the chassis fabrication and later the final bus assembly and fitting).
- 3.5.2 The hydrogen buses will be an important addition to the region's existing fleet, which is already more than 70% low emissions and will play an important part in contributing to the Liverpool City Region's ambition to become net zero carbon by 2040 at the latest.
- 3.5.3 Hydrogen supplier Air Products and Arriva continue to work through contract legal drafting for the refuelling agreement, with the aim of signing early November. Air Products are providing a turnkey solution for all aspects of the refuelling and depot modifications required and ground surveys for the permanent refuelling facility at St Helens will commence shortly.
- 3.5.4 Environmental Audits along the 10A corridor have commenced in advance of the arrival of the new buses arriving, with the aim of is to mitigation against the risk of anti-social behaviour and damage.
- 3.6 Travelsafe
- 3.6.1 Merseyside Police continue to restore the establishment of the Merseyside Police dedicated TravelSafe Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the review of the Merseyside Police TravelSafe team. TravelSafe Partnership Board met for first time in 12mnoths this quarter and the new TravelSafe Partnership Strategy 2022-25 was discussed and agreed by members.
- 3.6.2 The partnership continues to work with local neighbourhood policing in areas such as St Helens where there has been a sudden increase in anti-social behaviour on the Transport Network, particularly in areas of Wirral in the lead up to Operation Banger.

4. IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Social Value

Social value is built into bus contracts and procurement processes.

GBR 10A : A Social Value Sponsorship Brief and Scoring Criteria has been developed by the consultant team. Final amends are being made to this at the moment before it is opened up for submissions. The Consultant Team are liaising with BikeRight who will deliver 3 Dr Bike maintenance sessions, one in each LA the 10A runs through.

GBR 86A/ 53: A meeting was held on 23/09/2022 with the consultant team to understand their proposed Social Value Deliverables. The consultant team will be put in touch with The Combined Authority's engagement team who will link them to appropriate community groups along these corridors.

5. CONCLUSION

This report has key bus-led projects and an overview of how the Bus Team has been maintaining a safe and reliable bus network whilst dealing with the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

RICHARD MCGUCKIN
Executive Director - Place

COUNCILLOR LIAM ROBINSON
Transport and Air Quality Portfolio Holder

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Merseyside Network Confirmed Changes 4
September 2022

Appendix 2: The first images of the interior of the new, zero-emission hydrogen bus fleet were released in this quarter

[First look inside state-of-the-art new hydrogen buses coming to Liverpool City Region | Liverpool City Region Combined Authority - News \(liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/news/first-look-inside-state-of-the-art-new-hydrogen-buses-coming-to-liverpool-city-region)

[Mayor gives public first real-life look at city region's new hydrogen buses | Liverpool City Region Combined Authority - News \(liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/news/mayor-gives-public-first-real-life-look-at-city-region-s-new-hydrogen-buses)

Background Documents: