

Report Title	Quarterly Bus Update
Portfolio Holder	Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transport and Air Quality
Summary of report	<p>The purpose of this report is to update the Transport Committee on key bus issues relating to the third quarter of 2022/23.</p> <p>Specifically, the report will provide an update on the milestones of the Bus Alliance and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), 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.</p>
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 ✓ 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 4.2
Human Resources implications	No
Physical Assets implications	No
Information Technology implications	No
Legal implications	No
Risk and Mitigation	Yes see paragraph 4.3

Privacy implications

No

Communication and consultation implications

Yes see paragraph 4.4

Contact Officer(s)

Matt Goggins, Assistant Director: Bus
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Appendices

Yes
Appendix 1: Southport Area Network Map
Appendix 2: St Helens Area Network Map

Background Documents

No

LCR Transport Committee

Thursday, 9 March 2023

Report of the Assistant Director for Bus

QUARTERLY BUS UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the LCR Transport Committee on key bus issues relating to the third quarter of 2022/23.
- 1.2. Specifically, the report will provide an update on progress with 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

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

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Network and funding

- 3.1.1 Funding support from central government for the region's bus network has been extended to the end of the financial year, although no funding beyond that has yet been confirmed. Overall bus patronage is currently at approximately 85% of pre-pandemic levels, so the funding is important in terms of retaining existing levels of bus services.
- 3.1.2 Officers meet regularly with commercial bus operators to discuss network planning, and will be assessing operator plans beyond April 2023 should financial support from central government not continue past this point.

3.2 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

- 3.2.1 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 up to three years.
- 3.2.2 As required under BSIP guidance, initial work to review the BSIP, following its submission, has been completed by the Combined Authority Bus and Policy teams and an update was approved on 18 November 2022 for submission to the Department for Transport (DfT).

3.2.3 A Liverpool City Region Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) has been committed to in the Combined Authority's BSIP and is part of the requirements set out in the Department for Transport's National Bus Strategy BSIP guidance. The BPC is expected to outline a set of commitments to bus passengers, corresponding to the values outlined in the BSIP.

3.2.4 The BPC is expected to outline the standards customers should expect of their bus journey, planning, ticketing and waiting experience, as well as network coverage and punctuality/reliability standards. Work on the BPC is being developed, including through gaining feedback through consultation with local authorities, operators and passenger representatives.

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. Work to progress the approved recommendations has continued since then.

3.3.2 As required by the Bus Services Act 2017, an independent review of the completed assessment of bus franchising have been completed.

3.3.3 A report on the next stages of the bus reform process will be considered by the Combined Authority on 3rd March 2023.

3.4 **Green Bus Routes**

3.4.1 During Q3 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 traffic modelling. All of the deliverables in relation to the above were issued to Local Authority Partners (Liverpool, Knowsley and St Helens Council) in November 2022 as planned. Three traffic modelling workshops were delivered with Local Authority Partners to explain in detail the strategic and microsimulation modelling outputs. The Transport Advisory Group (TAG) was engaged on the outputs and a stakeholder engagement exercise has been planned for Q4.

3.4.2 A public engagement plan, stakeholder mapping, public facing collateral and website have been developed in collaboration with local authorities in preparation for the public engagement exercise. *Groundswell* will also 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 A procurement exercise was conducted to secure a consultancy partner for the detailed design element for the 10A route. This new commission will progress the preliminary design work already carried out through to detailed design stage, and subsequently lead into the procurement exercise for the construction stage of the route.

3.4.4 Consultants have been appointed for the commission of the 53 & 86 Options Appraisal Report. A stakeholder workshop was held in November 2022 with Arriva,

Sefton Council, Liverpool City Council, Combined Authority's LTP Development, Bus Development and Bus Priority Teams all in attendance. A review of the Liverpool City Council Active Travel schemes with their consultants also took place and the scope for the 53/86 OAR will be re-evaluated accordingly to compliment both projects.

3.4.5 The Bus Priority Lead Officer started in post in October 2022. This post will bolster the programme team with individuals that are experienced in delivering similar schemes in other areas.

3.4.6 The risk management approach has been revised to align with the Transport Pipeline stage gate review process and will be tested at the next Stage gate review.

3.5 **LCR Hybus Project**

3.5.1 The first completed HyBus took centre stage on the Alexander Dennis (ADL) stand at the Euro Bus & Coach Expo event at Birmingham's NEC in November 2022, where it was awarded star of the show. This formed the global launch of ADL's first production hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) product and the 20 buses represent their first order for the technology.

3.5.2 Whilst the power train choice was a significant factor and the main reason for people to visit the stand, what really dominated discussion from visitors to the show was the high spec onboard experience set for passengers. A design led approach has delivered a warm and colourful interior with imagery representing every part of the city region, a first of a kind unique Liverpool City Region seating moquette which is repeated in graphics on the coving panels. Every feature in the Bus Back Better (National Bus Strategy) and more has been adopted as a standard feature on HyBus, including twin wheelchair bays, audio visual next stop announcements (with real time rail integration as the bus approaches a rail station to ease interchange between modes) and a hearing loop system.

3.5.3 A decluttering of the interior saloon has led to the deleting of every hand pole that isn't a legal requirement in favour of loops in the side of every seat headrest creating a more spacious feel whilst ensuring that passengers have more opportunities to support movement through the saloons. This is then complimented not just by the clever warm white lighting touches throughout the interior but also the additional glazing that allows more natural light in via three upper deck skylights and a fully glazed staircase.

3.5.4 Following the Bus & Coach Expo in November, the project team have visited the factory to see the latest developments of the production process. This was followed more recently by a local reveal of the bus for local stakeholders, a visiting delegation from the DfT and members of the public.

3.5.5 The preferred hydrogen supplier and Arriva continue to work through contract legal drafting for the refuelling agreement, with the aim of signing in early Q4. A turnkey solution for all aspects of the refuelling and depot modifications required, along with and ground surveys for the permanent refuelling facility at St Helens, is to be provided and will commence shortly.

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. This has been delayed due to resourcing issues across the force and prioritised work that took precedence.
- 3.6.2 TravelSafe Partnership Board met during Q3 and the new TravelSafe Partnership Strategy 2022-25 was discussed and agreed by members. Development of branding for the new strategy document is underway and TravelSafe continue to work on the workstreams embedded within the strategy that will deliver activities for the next three years.
- 3.6.3 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, and in areas of Wirral in the lead up to Operation Banger. The recently experienced levels of ASB, lead to the diversion of services in and around the Leasowe area with the main operator Arriva having major concerns expressed by the drivers' union. Close partnership working with the local authority, Merseyside police and officers resulted in the resumption of services and the situation has improved following full-service restoration. Areas such as Birkenhead Bus Station remain a priority to the partnership and as a result a special operation was lead in the area on Boxing Day which not only assured passenger safety but supported the travelling public during the holiday period.
- 3.6.4 During the three key nights of Operation Banger (30 and 31 October and 5 November) there were 23 incidents that resulted in smashed windows compared to 9 to the previous year. There was also increase in overall incidents reported by the bus companies with 80 reports of missiles being thrown and groups of people gathering compared to 48 reports the previous year. However, the increase in attempted damage and anti-social behaviour incidents can be partly attributed to improved reporting processes and communications with the bus drivers. Like previous years the bus companies instigated diversions in previous hotspot areas as soon as any buses were damaged to prevent any further incidents. This resulted in diversions in various locations across the region, including Maghull, Netherton, West Derby, Speke, Garston Village and Princes Park gates. TravelSafe was involved in the Operation Banger policing plan and monitored incidents on the key nights since 2007 and overall has seen a long-term trend in decline of incidents. Significantly, this is the first year that there have been no incidents of smashed windows in the Kirkby area on the key nights and consequently no diversions.

3.7 Transport Information

- 3.7.1 During Q3, the roll out of the new style bus network maps was completed with the Southport Bus Network Map published in October (see Appendix 1) and the St Helens Bus Network Map published in December (see Appendix 2).
- 3.7.2 The local network map for Belle Vale Interchange was displayed at stops within Belle Vale interchange on Hedgefield Road. The roll out of this style of map will be aligned with Green Bus Routes with nine potential locations along route 10A identified - Royal Liverpool University Hospital (Prescot Street), Kensington (Sheil

Road), Old Swan, Alder Hey Hospital, Page Moss, M57 (junction 2), Prescott town centre, Whiston Hospital, and Asda Roundabout (Westfield Street / St Helens Linkway).

- 3.7.3 A transport information external review was completed in December. The options and recommendations will be reviewed by Bus, Rail, Active Travel and Marketing and Communications and an action plan will be put together for delivery from Q4 onwards.
- 3.7.4 Digital and printed information for public transport services over the Christmas period was produced. Officers gathered information from local bus and train operators and detailed changes to Mersey Ferries, Mersey Tunnels and Customer Service and Travel Centre opening times. A separate leaflet for Christmas Day Bus Services was also produced, which for the first time provided full timetable information, including route description and maps, for the services that are operated on Christmas Day.

4. IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Supporting the Corporate Plan

A Fairer City Region - Buses are a mechanism to tackle inequality and social inclusion. Through BSIP bus fares will be fairer and better value for all.

A Stronger City Region - The development of zero emission bus technology as set out in the Combined Authority's Vision for Bus will bring new skills and training opportunities.

A Cleaner City Region - Investment in bus priority measures through the Green Bus Routes programme will speed up bus journeys and make them more reliable and attractive to users.

A Vibrant City Region - The bus network enables people to access the region's cultural offer and nighttime economy.

A Connected City Region - Buses help to connect people to employment opportunities right across the City Region.

4.2 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 local authority the 10A runs through.

GBR 86A/ 53: A meeting was held on 23 September 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.

4.3 Risks and Mitigation

Separate Risk registers for Green Bus Routes, HyBus and Bus Reform are maintained and reported on regularly and integrated into the corporate risk register.

4.4 Communication and Consultation

Separate communication plans for Green Bus Routes, HyBus and Bus Reform are maintained and reported on regularly.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report provides an overview of how the Bus Team has been working with operators, partners and colleagues to help maintain a safe and reliable bus network whilst progressing key projects and programmes to improve the bus offer.

MATT GOGGINS
Assistant Director for Bus

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Southport Area Network Poster
Appendix 2: St Helens Area Network Poster

Background Documents:

None