

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan- Metrocentre Pocket Park and Ride Approval
Report of: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport
Portfolio: Transport

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek a delegated decision to approve the Metrocentre Pocket Park and Ride scheme which has a total project value of £165,149.59. This scheme stems from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Pocket Park and Ride sub programme which has an allocation of £3.5 million and was endorsed at Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in December 2023.

The scheme was approved at JTC in December 2023 with an allocation of £800,000, however following a de-scope of the project, see Section 2 for details, the finalised costings are £165,149.59. This approval was subject to due diligence via independent assurers to ensure that there was no risk to delivery. This has now been fulfilled, and in line with thresholds set out in the Single Assurance Framework and delegation agreed by Cabinet in July 2024, approval is sought to establish a Grant Funding Agreement with Gateshead Council to progress delivery of the scheme and to unlock the project amount.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to:

- a. Approve the Metrocentre Park and Ride scheme which has a total project value of £165,149.59
- b. Enable the payment of funding and the establishment of a Grant Funding Agreement.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal (Context)

Project Outline	
Funding Source	Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme
Proposal Name	Metrocentre Park and Ride
Lead Organisation	Gateshead Council
Delivery Areas	Gateshead
Start Date	March 2025
Financial End Date	June 2025
Total Project Value	£165,149.59
Grant Amount Requested	£165,149.59
Budget Implications	The requested grant can be met within the overall BSIP capital budget. The remaining allocation for the park and ride sub-programme is £3,334,850

1. Background

- 1.1 The North East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is the region's response to the Government's National Bus Strategy for England which was initially published in March 2021 and has subsequently been refreshed on an annual basis. The BSIP set out a clear ambition to improve real time passenger information by moving to a next generation system.

- 1.2** At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members approved a funding award of £163.5m of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, of which £73.75m was allocated for capital delivery. At the same meeting the JTC made the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EP) and Scheme which set out through a statutory partnership, how Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes which included improving information provision. This approval confirmed funding allocations to enable BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be delivered.
- 1.3** In December 2023, JTC Members approved and allocated £800,000 to the delivery of the Metrocentre Park and Ride subject to independent consultants undertaking a review of the scheme proposals to minimise any risk. The delivery of these schemes will be subject to relevant authority approvals following due diligence which will be enabled by this funding and the necessary stakeholder engagement required.
- 1.4** At the July 2024, meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, Members re-confirmed the decisions previously made by JTC and delegated authority to the Chief Executive to enter into the relevant decisions in agreement with Monitoring Officer and the Director of Finance and Investment and in consultation with the Mayor and the relevant Cabinet Member.

2. The Investment Proposal

The BSIP Metrocentre Pocket Park and Ride (PPR) comprises utilising a part of the Metrocentre coach and staff car park as a park and ride site which would provide people with a multi-modal method of travel along a key route within Gateshead. A number of existing bus services including express services which serve the Metrocentre and travel to Gateshead Interchange and Newcastle City Centre, will now observe the park and ride facility. A lease agreement has been signed between the Metrocentre and Gateshead Council to deliver this project.

Due to a slight descope of the project which primarily is around the amount of car spaces within the facility and the reduction in the purchase of Variable Messaging Signs, and confirmation of finalised costs, the project total has reduced from £800,000 to £165,149.59.

Due diligence has been undertaken by independent assurers which confirms that this project can be fully delivered by March 2026, and meets the overarching objectives of the BSIP, the Local Transport Plan, and the wider North East CA priorities.

2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	2025/26	Total
Park and Ride Spaces	195	195
New bus stop at park and ride facility	1	1

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Increased patronage on bus services stopping at the designated park and ride bus stop.	6 months post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Customer satisfaction with park and ride facility	6 months post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Air quality and greenhouse gas emissions – reduced fuel consumption and tailpipe emissions due to lower	1 year post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)

levels of congestion and improved journey times for buses.		
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2.2 Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Grant funding Agreements	March 2025
Delivery Commences	April 2025
Delivery Completion	April 2025

2.3 Evaluation

Evaluation will be undertaken by the scheme promoter in partnership with the Enhanced Partnership Team; a monitoring and evaluation plan has been produced and will be embedded into the forthcoming Grant Funding Agreement.

2.4 Appraisal

Independent appraisal identified no fundamental issues to programme delivery or viability. This provides comfort that proposals are sufficiently developed and pose limited delivery risk.

2.5 RAG Assessment

The project's full business case has been assured by specialist independent appraisers who have provided the following summary:

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic case	Green
	Commercial case	Green
	Economic case	Green
	Financial case	Green
	Management case	Green
	Overall rating	Green

2.6 Recommended Conditions of Funding

The award of funding would be **subject to the following proposed funding conditions:**

No.	Condition
1.	All funding must be defrayed by March 2026
2.	All funding can only be spent on scheme deliverables set out in the project business case.

B. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

BSIP and its programme of activity supports the strategic aspirations of the North East CA, as detailed in the North East Devolution Deal signed in December 2022 and the Deeper Devolution Deal agreed at the June meeting of the North East CA Cabinet. The benefits that will be realised

through the delivery of this BSIP project will include improved reliability and punctuality of bus services and journey time savings.

C. Key risks

The key risk associated with this report is the ability of scheme promoters to defray BSIP capital expenditure within the overall BSIP programme timescales required by the Department for Transport (March 2026). Approval and agreement of the proposals outlined within this report aid in the delivery of interventions within the required timescales.

D. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the programme is outlined below:

Funding source- BSIP Capital	2024/25	2025/26	Total
<i>Gateshead Council</i>	136,150	28,499.59	165,149.59
Total (£)	136,150	28,499.59	165,149.59

Status of match funding:

No match funding is required for BSIP.

Funding availability:

The funding which has been identified in this report is fully allocated to this scheme and was approved at JTC in December 2023, this was re-confirmed by North East CA Cabinet in July 2024.

E. Legal implications

Grant Funding Agreements (GFA) are being developed, prepared, and will be approved by Newcastle City Council Legal for onwards agreement with the scheme promoter. GFAs will minimise any legal risks and ensure the North East CA's obligations to the Department for Transport in regard to BSIP funding are met, these obligations will be appropriately transferred to each scheme promoter through the GFA. Clear roles and responsibilities have been established concerning the design and development of proposed infrastructure, including ensuring compliance with Health and Safety and CDM regulations.

F. Equalities implications

The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty, and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. In June 2024 the North East CA adopted equality objectives to reflect the different roles of the Combined Authority as an employer, a commissioner and deliverer of services, and a civic leader. This project will improve reliability and punctuality of bus services, and a reduction in journey times by reducing pinch points across the corridor.

G. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP Bus Priority Infrastructure programme and this project has been consulted on and considered through Heads of Transport of the LA7 constituent authorities and at the March 2024 meeting of the Joint Transport Committee. BSIP capital funding was approved and allocated at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet.

Gateshead Council have undertaken consultation and stakeholder engagement activities as part of the scheme which includes local businesses and residents where applicable.

H. Appendices

N/A

I. Background papers

[North East Combined Authority Cabinet Meeting July 2024](#)

J. Contact officers.

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K. Glossary

North East CA – North East Combined Authority

BSIP- Bus Service Improvement Plan

JTC- Joint Transport Committee

DfT- Department for Transport

L. Consultee

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes