

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan Durham Milburngate 'Super Hub' Bus Station Approval
Report of: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport
Portfolio: Transport

Report Summary:

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of Durham's Milburngate 'super shelter' bus station project which has a total project value of £999,536. This project sits within the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Safe and Accessible Bus Stations Programme Business Case (PBC) which has a total value of £5,557,588.

A delegation to the Chief Executive was agreed by Cabinet in July 2024, to enter into the relevant agreements as required, in accordance with the Single Assurance Framework of up to £40.468 million (capital) of BSIP funding to deliver a range of schemes through Grant Funding Agreement. The BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stations sub-programme business case was approved in October 2024 by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Transport. This scheme was included within the programme level business case and is now seeking final approval of funds having met the necessary requirements. The report was supported at the Technical Officers Group meeting of 18th August 2025. This decision also agreed the assurance route for projects within the Safe and Accessible Bus Stops Programme, noting that each intervention would be required to go through scheme level assurance inclusive of detailed consultation, local approval and S151 sign off from the sponsoring Local Authority prior to sign off.

These requirements have now been fulfilled for the Milburngate 'super shelter' bus station scheme, and in line with thresholds set out in the Single Assurance Framework and the delegation agreed by Cabinet in July 2024 as outlined in section 1.3, approval is sought to establish a Grant Funding Agreement with Durham County Council to progress delivery.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to:

- i. Approve Durham's Milburngate 'Super Hub' Bus Station project which has a total value of £999,536 and is funded by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Safe and Accessible Bus Stations 2 sub-programme.
- ii. Enable the establishment of a Grant Funding Agreement and the payment of funding to Durham County Council.

A. Summary of Investment Proposal:

| Project Outline | |
|---|--|
| Funding Source | Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme |
| Proposal Name | Milburngate 'super shelter' Bus station |
| Lead Organisation | Durham County Council |
| Delivery Areas | Durham |
| Start Date | August 2025 |
| Financial End Date | March 2026 |
| Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved) | April 2026 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Total Project Value | £999,536 |
| Grant Amount Requested | £999,536 |
| Budget Implications | The requested grant can be met within the overall BSIP capital budget. |

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 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.
- 1.4 In line with the Single Assurance Framework and in line with the delegation agreed at July 2024 Cabinet, the BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stations programme business case which has a total value of £5,557,588 was presented at Technical Officers Group and Finance and Investment Board; both recommended that the programme be approved via a delegated decision, the delegated decision was subsequently approved in October 2024 by the Chief Executive in agreement with Monitoring Officer and the Director of Finance and Investment. This approval released £90,550 of development funding for the Milburngate 'super shelter' scheme to enable an Assurance Statement to be progressed setting out final costings and detailed design. Durham County Council have finalised their Assurance Statement and are now in a position to commence delivery of the scheme. Additional schemes from across the region within the Safe and Accessible Bus Stations programme will come forward for approval in due course subject to finalisation of their Assurance Statement.

2. The Investment Proposal

- 2.1 Durham's Milburngate 'super shelter' bus station will see the provision of four large shelters, these will significantly improve on the existing shelter layout through the provision of raised kerbs which will fundamentally improve accessibility for individuals with mobility impairments who have the greatest difficulty in accessing services. Real time information visuals will be improved and upgraded to the latest version to receive bus location data at a higher frequency and greater precision and a timetabling information system for people with audio impairment (REACT) will be provided, as well as enhanced information and wayfinding provision.
- 2.2 This project is part of the wider BSIP Safe and Accessibility Bus Stations programme which involves improvements to bus stations and the surrounding vicinity to enhance accessibility provision to stations across the region. These are focused improvements to significantly improve the safety and security provision to passengers across the region.
- 2.3 An Assurance Statement has been produced which confirms that this project can be fully delivered by April 2026, and meets the overarching objectives of the BSIP, the Local Transport Plan, and the North East CA's wider priorities for investment.

2.4 Outputs and Outcomes

| | | |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Outputs | 25/26 | Total |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|

| | | |
|--|------|-------------|
| Provision of large shelters which will improve on the existing shelter layout to ensure accessibility for all. | 4 | 4 |
| Installation of Real Time Information visual boards | 4 | 4 |
| Timetabling board with Real Time Information which works for people with audio impairment (REACT) | 1 | 1 |
| Widening of footpath to enhance accessibility | 7.3m | 7.3m |

| Description of Outcomes | Timeframe for achievement | Totals |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Growth in bus patronage | 3 years post completion | Increase from baseline (identified in M&E) |
| Increased bus passenger satisfaction | 3 years post completion | Increase from baseline (identified in M&E) |
| Increase in bus patronage by those who are disabled and or those with protected characteristics | 3 years post completion | Increase from baseline (identified in M&E) |

2.5 Timetable for Implementation

| Milestone | Forecast Date |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Grant funding Agreements | August 2025 |
| Delivery Commences | August 2025 |
| Delivery Completion | April 2026 |

2.6 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.

2.7 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.

2.8 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 |

2.9 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. |

A. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

The LTP and its associated Delivery Plan place a key focus on delivering a fully integrated public transport system, better travel planning and ensuring smoother journeys, with a focus on safety and security for women and girls. The proposal included within this report directly contribute towards achieving these aims, and in turn, support the North East Combined Authority corporate objectives, in particular, delivering a Home of real opportunity and a North East we are proud to call home. The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of the BSIP funded scheme included in this report will improve the attractiveness, accessibility, safety and security of public transport, leading to more people choosing to travel sustainably, journey time savings for people choosing to travel sustainably and the reduction in harmful emissions owing to a concerted focus on decarbonisation. Delivery of investment through BSIP as a whole will lay the foundations for an integrated and inclusive transport network to be realised through the TCR fund delivering a fairer, greener, better connected and successful North East.

B. 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.

C. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the programme is outlined below:

| Funding source | 2025/26 | Total |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| BSIP | £999,536 | £999,536 |
| Total | £999,536 | £999,536 |

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 and has previously been committed to this sub-programme by the Joint Transport Committee and was re-confirmed by North East CA Cabinet in July 2024. This allocation identified for Durham within the signed off business case in October 2024 has not deviated.

| Name of Programme/Scheme | Date of approval sought / agreed | Value £ |
|---|--|------------|
| BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Stations Programme Business Case Approval. | Delegated Decision approved in October 2024 (in line with Cabinet approval in July 2024) | £5,557,588 |
| BSIP Milburngate "super hub" Bus Station Development Funding | Delegated Decision approved in October 2024 (in line with | £90,950 |

| | Cabinet approval in July 2024) | |
|---|---|-------------------|
| BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus station – Milburngate “super hub” Bus Station | August 2025 at Technical Officers Group | £999,536 |
| Total BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Station Programme Funding Remaining | - | £4,467,102 |

The remaining budget identified above is sufficient to fund all remaining schemes within the overall programme.

D. Legal implications

Grant Funding Agreements (GFA) are being developed, prepared, and will be approved by the CA's Monitoring Officer for onwards agreement with 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 Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM).

E. 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. Accessibility Improvements to the surrounding areas leading to and from Milburngate will significantly improve access to those individuals and groups who experience mobility and accessibility difficulties.

F. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP Safe and Accessible Bus Station programme have 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.

Durham County Council have undertaken consultation and stakeholder engagement activities with local ward members, the public and businesses whilst developing this scheme.

G. Appendices

N/A

H. Background papers

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

I. Contact officers.

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J. Glossary

North East CA: North East Combined Authority
BSIP: Bus Service Improvement Plan

JTC: Joint Transport Committee

DfT: Department for Transport

TCR: Transport for City Regions

CDM: Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

K. Consultee

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cabinet Member: | Director/Head of Service: | Director of Finance and Investment: | Monitoring Officer: |
| Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |